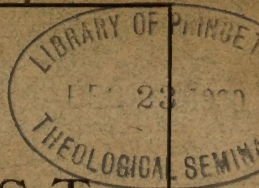


Geo. Bromley.



JESUS CHRIST

AND THE

PRESENT AGE

BEING THE TWENTY-FIFTH FERNLEY LECTURE

DELIVERED IN THE SHERWELL ROAD CHAPEL

PLYMOUTH, AUGUST 2, 1895

BY

JAMES CHAPMAN

PRINCIPAL OF SOUTHLANDS TRAINING COLLEGE

London

CHARLES H. KELLY

2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD.; AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

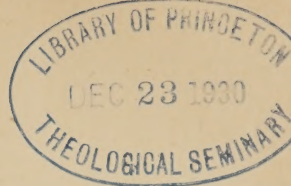
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1895

TO

A. Russell Johnson

AS A TOKEN OF

THE AUTHOR'S APPRECIATION

OF HIS LONG, FAITHFUL, AND PATIENT

FRIENDSHIP

P R E F A C E

I HAVE often wished that the title of this lecture had been less ambitious, or that the treatment were more adequate; but I am not able to amend either. May I venture to hope that the largeness of the aim may, in some degree, excuse the poverty of the performance!

It is difficult to reconcile, as a Fernley Lecturer is expected to do, the requirements of a popular audience and the demands of readers versed in theology. It is easy to sacrifice one class to the other, and, indeed, to disappoint both.

No claim is made to originality. If at any point the web is taken to pieces, threads from various sources will be found woven in it. Many passages are the development of germs the origin of which I have forgotten. Every definite and ascertainable obligation I have been careful to acknowledge.

My friend, the Rev. T. Alexander Seed, has done me the favour of looking over the proofs. It is a pleasure to acknowledge in this connexion the increasing advantage to me of our growing friendship.

SOUTHLANDS, *October* 20, 1895.

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JESUS CHRIST AND THE PRESENT AGE



INTRODUCTION

I

EACH age has doubtless seemed to its own children specially interesting and important. Compared with its vivid experiences, its absorbing interests, its anxious questions, its conflicting passions, its impending dangers, the ages behind, with their issues all determined, as reflected in the calm pages of history, have appeared tame and ordinary. Such estimates are largely the effect of illusion, against which, in judging of our own time, we must be always on our guard.

Yet, as he looks back, the dispassionate historian sees that certain periods have possessed all, and more than all, the importance which those who lived in them believed them to possess. They have been periods when, from one cause or another, the conditions of human life have been profoundly modified. One of these periods of singular importance was the age in which the Roman empire was consolidated; when all the nationalities

surrounding the Mediterranean Sea were drawn into a common life; when regular and safe communications by sea and land were established, and brought about a general circulation of the various races; when a long peace mitigated the fierceness of human passions, and liberated for other pursuits the energies previously employed in war; when a system of imperial law developed the sense of equity; when the outlook of men was widened and their sphere enlarged; when society required new bonds because the old had been cut or burst, and new foundations because the old had lost their validity.

Such a period, also, was the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time the antique world had been restored to the knowledge of Western Europe through the recovery of Greek literature, and had deeply stirred the thoughts of men, supplying new standards and principles of judgment; the national languages had been fitted to become the vehicles of thought; the printing press had made it possible to appeal widely to men; the improvement in the weapons of war had shaken the feudal system and favoured the growth and influence of towns with their eager life; social conditions engaged the general thought, and the best men were dreaming of new forms of social organisation.¹ The world in which men's thoughts moved was being widened by the discovery of America and increased communication with Africa and the distant East, made possible by the mariner's compass, which had rendered the sea a comparatively safe highway.

It will be seen that these two great epochs in European history agree in three features, in which lie the causes of

¹ See More's *Utopia*, and legislation in England at that period.

their special interest—a general advance of knowledge, a process of social reconstruction, and a widening of the world. It is impossible then to be blind to the supreme interest and importance of the age in which we live, for it presents these features in a more marked degree than any previous period of recorded history.

1. By means of a better method, improved instruments, and more systematic and organised research, vast materials of knowledge, both of nature and history, have been accumulated. They have been gathered from the starry spaces, the depths of ocean, and the folds of the rocks, as well as from every region of the earth's wide surface from unearthed monuments, and from the transmitted records of mankind. Out of these materials, by means of hypotheses such as evolution and the conservation of energy, a new and imposing view of the world has been built up. There is no extravagance in saying that the general view of nature and man has undergone a greater revolution during the last half-century than during all the Christian centuries which have preceded it. And this view has been commended and verified to men in general by the great services which the advance of knowledge has rendered to their material interests.

2. Social readjustments are rapidly taking place. The great inventions of this century have altered the conditions of life in a degree unprecedented in any former period. Steam power introduced methods of manufacture, which have brought men together in great centres of industry; the railway and telegraph have enabled them to form large and powerful combinations. The dim, common populations have become organised, furnished with

knowledge, armed with political power. The standing evils of society, previously seen only in fragments, are seen and studied in all their magnitude; evils previously unknown have arisen out of the new conditions; and both are heightened by contrast with the most comfortable and delightful forms of life the world has yet beheld. Men have become impatient of evils as old as man's lot on the earth, and fancy that they possess in science and in organisation the power to redress them all. The milder conditions of life have caused a vague pity and generosity to stir in the breasts of men, moving them to raise the lowly and to succour the distressed. The forms of society are changing under the action of these new forces, and are likely to be changed still more according to the deliberate plans of men.

3. Improved means of communication, extended commerce, colonisation, conquest, are drawing the nations together, and constituting them one vast system, a great organic whole, each member of which affects more or less all the other members, and contributes to the common consciousness.

II

There can, then, be no doubt but that the present age, along with the two others we have selected for mention, will rank among the most interesting and important periods in the history of man, as marking a critical stage in human development.

Now, on looking back over the two periods to which we have referred, we cannot fail to see, though it would

hardly have been noted at the time, that the greatest change which took place was a change in the religious views and feelings of men. Indeed, the first of these periods has taken its name from the rise of Christianity, and the second from the Reformation. The Roman empire had created the need for a new religion, for it had destroyed the old religions by bringing them face to face with all their varieties and contradictions. It was felt by the thoughtful that they could not all be true, though they might all be false. A religion, as universal, at least, as the Roman empire, was required, and no existing religion would serve. The noble monotheism of Israel, which attracted much attention among the devout, had petrified into Judaism and had become singularly oppressive and exclusive. The softening of manners which had taken place prepared men for a milder faith. At this time, in the person of Jesus, Christianity descended out of heaven from God, and, aided by the movements we have briefly described, took possession of the Roman world.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, from the causes at which we have glanced, a new spirit had arisen among the leading nations, which the corrupted form of Christianity then prevailing could not satisfy. The keenest criticism, enlightened by the authentic words of our Lord and His apostles, was applied to it, and its corruptions were revealed. The spirit of liberty, born of the conditions of the time, and fostered by the choicest literature of Greece, resented its oppressions. A new sense of individual responsibility made men bold in thought and deed. And so the Christian religion for half Europe was reformed, purified, simplified, and even that part of

the old Church which we do not speak of as reformed had its more flagrant corruptions purged away. Christianity was brought in the one case very much, and in the other case in some degree, nearer to its pure, original form.

We see, then, that the two previous periods of European history which most resembled the present time in their general outlines, in which similar forces were working, though far less powerfully, were marked by deep religious agitation, and had as their outcome, in the one case the acceptance, and in the other the renewal, of Christianity. We know that in both cases the more cautious and conservative minds were afraid of the result; but the result has been clearly to the advantage of mankind. Can we wonder, then, that the vastly greater changes which the present age has witnessed should be accompanied by a similar religious unrest? and is there any reason to fear that the result will not, finally, be as salutary as in the other cases?

There are some, indeed, who think religion itself to be in danger. But such a thought cannot possibly survive a moment's consideration. A sentiment which we find in man all over the world and in every age must arise out of the very "make of his nature," and be required by the primal conditions of his life. And when we see, further, that whenever this sentiment has been for a time enfeebled, society has suffered from wasting sickness and depression, and that when it has recovered its vigour, health has returned to society, our conviction is strengthened.¹ If we find that a certain function is active in

¹ "The epochs in which faith, in whatever form it may be, prevails are the marked epochs of human history, full of heart-stirring memories and

every living body, and that, other things being equal, vitality varies with it, we know that it is a vital function. Perhaps the chief service which Mr. Kidd's book has rendered is that it has reminded us of this simple truth. That we needed to be reminded of it is a proof of the bewilderment and confusion into which the minds of men had been temporarily thrown by the rapid movements of the age. The wider and more systematised our knowledge of the world becomes, the more it will require a first principle, in which power and thought are joined together, to account for the world and for the human mind, and for their singular correspondence. The more imposing the social fabrics which it is proposed to erect, the more necessary will be deep and firm foundations and strong ties. The more closely the world is drawn together, the more the need of a universal bond will be felt. And it is undoubtedly to religion that we must look for all these services: these are the functions which it has been performing from the beginning. The "prophetic strain" in our words, when we say that religion will have a greater part to play in the future than it has played in the past, is justified by the "old experience" of mankind.

Equally unthinking is the anxiety which many seem to feel as to the future of Christianity, though it may have some excuse in certain aspects of our time. But as the supply of that religious element essential to man and to

of substantial gains for all after times. On the other hand, the epochs in which unbelief, in whatever form it may be, gains its unhappy victories, even when for a moment they put on a semblance of glory and success, inevitably sink into insignificance in the eyes of a posterity which will not waste its thoughts on things barren and unfruitful."—Goethe (quoted in Caird's *Social Philosophy of Comte*, p. 160).

society, Christianity alone holds the field. Its position is really unchallenged ; it has no rival ; there is not even a pretender to its throne. Among the ranks of its adversaries there is not one who has shown the slightest ability to produce what shall replace it, or even an adequate idea of what a religion is required to be and do. The systems which have been offered in its place, in their only sound parts, have been branches lopped from it, under the impression, apparently, that the fruit which hangs about them is the product of the branches themselves, apart from the stem and the roots and the kindly soil in which they spread. The fact is, Christianity is in the presence of such an opportunity of displaying the powers which are folded within it as history has not previously afforded. Its doctrine of God, as One in whom power, intelligence, righteousness, and love are found together, as they are found together in that last and highest result of the great cosmic process,—the result which interprets the process,—a good man, and Who is constantly working in the world for its redemption, which also is the master impulse of a good man, contains treasures yet unlocked of inspiration and guidance. Its teaching as to man justifies the aspirations and efforts of modern philanthropy, knits those bonds between men which the best schemes for organising a distracted society imply and demand, and inspires the sentiments without which such schemes are mere futility and mockery. It has the universality, the breadth, the power, and the flexibility which will supply the common bond so necessary if the world is ever to become, as all the movements of the age are rapidly tending to make it, in certain respects one vast commonwealth. All that Christianity did for the Roman

empire in a critical period it is about to do for the modern world, and far more, as the opportunity is greater. But will Christianity, as now presented to men, undergo no change? There is every indication that, brought by the historical spirit of our age into fresh contact with its sources, it will become more pure and simple, as in the age of the Reformation.

III

This forecast is not merely the result of a personal judgment as to what is required by present conditions; it is a result rather of observation of what is actually taking place in the Christian Church. For the Church is showing the undiminished vigour of its life by the adaptation of the forms in which it presents its teaching to the changing environment. It is a mistake to suppose that the chief changes which we observe in the forms of Christian teaching are due to the attacks of opponents. These attacks have, at most, hastened a process which would have taken place without them. The changes we observe have been made by the loyal sons of the Church, reflecting in their minds the modern world, using its instruments, appropriating its accumulated knowledge, and sharing its wants and aspirations. It will be instructive to consider the tendencies which are at work, more or less consciously, in the minds of those who give form to the Christian teaching of the time.

1. The most observable tendency is to make less of dogma and more of the living facts of which dogma professes to be the scientific expression. There is a growing

feeling among Christian teachers that dogma is a more or less artificial form, which has been given to the truth by a particular age, according to its ruling conceptions of the world, and that the forms of the fourth or of the sixteenth centuries are not necessarily adapted to the nineteenth century. It is regarded as quite possible that these dogmas may be, not only, as they must be, an inadequate, but even an erroneous, representation of original Christianity. One deservedly eminent among Christian teachers¹ states this with great emphasis: "What to do with our creeds has become for all the Churches a burning question. That these creeds, centuries old, no longer express perfectly, or even approximately, the living faith of the Church, is being frankly acknowledged on every side. The free expression of the faith and spiritual life of former generations, they have become a bondage to the spirit and a snare to the conscience." The remedy he suggests is a "return to the gospels and to the Christianity of Christ." "A fresh intuition of Christ, and the new religious life which would flow from it," would have for one of its results a "fresh formulation of Christian belief, bearing an entirely different stamp from that of the historical Protestant confessions."² We venture to think that this goes too far; but it cannot be denied that there is much truth in it. No wise man would speak with anything but profound

¹ Dr. A. B. Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 353.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 348-353. "Le Christ est un inconnu, non seulement dans le monde, mais encore dans les Églises que se réclament de lui. Si quelque chose est obstrué, terni, dévié de sa direction première, c'est bien le vieil Évangile. Ce sera l'éternel honneur de la théologie historique, d'avoir rapproché l'Évangile primitive de la conscience du temps présent."—C. Wagner, *Jeunesse*, p. 396. This, of course, applies more closely to France than to England.

respect of traditional dogma. To its elaboration the treasures of the minds and hearts of the best men through long and patient centuries have been devoted. Men of every age have been under the same necessity of defining the truth for themselves as we feel, and they could only use the modes of thought which lay to their hand; and these stiff forms were doubtless necessary as a protective covering of the truth in ages not so calm as ours. But it is clear that the truth itself is greater than these forms, that there is in them much that is local, temporary, and perishable. To break the husk, to come at the living germ, the truth itself, and plant it in the living soil, the minds and hearts of men, is the aspiration of modern theology, which is becoming increasingly biblical and historical.¹ The same tendency is observable in another sphere, in the decline of doctrinal preaching, which is undoubtedly a fact, whatever the feelings with which we ought to regard it.

2. Another tendency in the Christian Church is to make Jesus Christ the living centre of Christian thought. Its teachers endeavour to keep Him more constantly in their eye, and test and estimate every detail of faith and practice by its relation to Him.² There is a disposition to make such a distinction, as St. Paul himself seems to have recognised, between His teaching and the teaching of

¹ "The old theology came to history through doctrine, but the new comes to doctrine through history," etc.—Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 3.

² "The revelation of God in Christ is rectifying all other and minor beliefs, and bringing them into harmony with this which is central and supreme; revising those that went before, and revising with no less freedom those which have followed after."—*The Divinity of Jesus Christ*, by four Andover Professors.

even His inspired apostles. If His words are not regarded as more true, they are considered to be more important and authoritative. The word Christocentric, which is in general use, and is certainly not recommended by its form, is itself an indication of this tendency. We do not, of course, mean that the Church has not in every age professed to regard Jesus Christ as the living centre of its faith, nor even that this profession was not in the deepest sense true. For whatever prominence has been given to the Church or the Bible, the former was always regarded as His body, and the latter as His book, occupied in its earlier pages in foreshadowing Him, in its central pages in portraying Him, and in its last pages in interpreting Him. And the divine virtue in Him informed and animated the very garments which partially concealed His form. Still the change can easily be felt, and it is likely to be fruitful. The same figures are in the scene,—the Lord, the Church, the Bible; but the first appears to have moved forward, the other two to have receded, and the scene has changed. It need hardly be said that to put them into their true relation to Him whose glory fills them will give to both Bible and Church a more real and effective authority.

3. A third tendency, as to the fact of which there can be no doubt at all, is to give greater prominence to the humanity of our Lord. There is a general conviction that it has not had its full acknowledgment in the teaching of the Church. Theologians have found it difficult to hold the balance, so carefully established by the definitions of the early councils, between the divine and human natures in the person of our Lord, and have generally

tended to abridge the humanity in favour of the divinity. We shrink from accusing the Church of obscuring, or even failing to present in its full proportions, a truth of primary importance; but about the fact there can be no doubt. Dorner, who has treated exhaustively the doctrine of the Person of Christ, says that until the Reformation the tendency was "to instal the Church and its prototype Mary in the place of Christ"; that "the saints represent the true humanity of Christ lost because of the preponderance of the divine side"; that "the mass was an attempt to create a surrogate for what a true doctrine of Christ's humanity ought to do"; and that "the Greek and Roman Churches find no essential and permanent importance in the humanity of Christ."¹ It has been very different in the Protestant Churches; yet even in them, except where the divinity of our Lord has been denied, His humanity has not always been presented so prominently as the New Testament seems to require. Canon Gore states the fact with great moderation: "In different ways it has come about that the reality of our Lord's human example, and therefore the true meaning of His manhood, have not been so much in view in the Christian Church as, to judge from the New Testament, they should have been, in their bearing on the life of individuals and of society. We need again and again to go back to the consideration of the historical Jesus."² Christian teachers, whose Bibles to-day fall open at the gospels, require that the humanity of

¹ Dorner's *System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. iii., pp. 222, 223. See also pp. 197, 210.

² Gore's *Bampton Lectures*, 1891, p. 144; cf. pp. 107, 108. See also Bruce's *Kingdom of God*, p. 348; *The Divinity of Christ*, p. 6, by four Andover Professors.

Christ shall be real, not the mere affectation of a human part by the Son of God, as it has so often been. This is not associated with any tendency to deny His divinity; probably Christian thought was never farther from Unitarianism than it is at present.¹ The object is rather to give reality and validity to our Lord's example, which is of so much value in the ethical conditions of our time.

4. Closely associated with this is the tendency to regard the work of Christ as a whole, instead of giving almost exclusive attention to His death and its doctrinal significance. The result has been to bring the details of His earthly life into a prominence which they have never had before. This has been a marked feature of the last half-century of Christian teaching. We are told, on the highest authority, that it was a characteristic of the Oxford movement in its earlier stages, though we should scarcely have thought so from the study of its records. However this may be, the following words admirably describe what has taken place in other sections of the Church: "Evangelical theology had dwelt upon the work of Christ, and laid comparatively little stress on His example, or the picture left us of His personality and life. The gospel narrative was imperfectly studied, and was felt to be much less interesting than the epistles." But there followed an "increased care for the gospels, and study of them, compared with other parts of the Bible. . . . The great Name stood no longer for an abstract symbol of doctrine, but for a living Master who could teach as well as save. And not forgetting whither He had gone, and what He was, the

¹ We might almost say that Unitarianism was never farther from itself. See Drummond's *Hibbert Lectures*, 1894.

readers of Scripture sought Him eagerly in those sacred records, where we can almost see and hear His going in and out among men.”¹ This tendency has been promoted by the critical attention given to every detail of the life of Christ in the course of that prolonged investigation which was initiated in so unhappy a manner by Strauss’ *Leben Jesu* in 1835, and which has not yet quite spent its force. As in other cases, the very violence of the attack on the historical sources of Christianity has turned out to be an advantage, for it made the study of them more thorough, and the vindication of them more complete. “This direction of thought has created for the life of Christ, and the historico-critical investigation of its sources, a literature of such an extent and richness as has been seen for the first time in the history of the Christian Church. According to the nature of the case, the human side of Christ—the person of Christ and its historical efficiency—must come into the foreground in these enquiries.”² This tendency is found in every region of Church life. When we compare the preaching of the last three centuries with the preaching of to-day, we cannot fail to see how much more occupied with the facts of our Lord’s earthly life the latter is. The great popularity of several Lives of Christ also shows that the tendency has reached the general public. We cannot doubt its salutary effect on the Church, imparting to the Christian life freshness and energy, widening the sympathies, and promoting every form of active philanthropy. This tendency will not in the long run diminish, but rather heighten, the

¹ Church’s *The Oxford Movement*, pp. 167, 168.

² Dorner’s *System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. iii., pp. 270, 271.

significance of our Lord's death. The better we know Him, the more will such a death require explanation, and that explanation will cast a fuller light on the heart of man and the purpose of God.

IV

We see, then, in the Christian Church clear tendencies to lay less stress on dogma and more stress on the facts themselves, to make the person of Jesus Christ the centre of religious thought, to insist on His complete humanity, and to give more attention to the details of His earthly life. The more general currents which manifest themselves in these tendencies are obvious. They are, the scientific spirit, the disposition visible everywhere to turn from theories and deductions from theories in order to make a careful preliminary investigation of the facts on which they rest, the historical spirit which has proved so fruitful in other spheres, and the ethical bent of the age.

Now the tendencies which the conditions of an age make almost inevitable, and which the Church both instinctively and deliberately follows, are very instructive. We see in them the earnest effort of Christian teachers to adapt themselves to the actual conditions of thought, to appeal to the world on its most accessible sides, and to supply its pressing needs. And is it possible to doubt that Christianity, brought into closer contact with its living springs, will renew its youth, unfold its treasures, and become more pure and simple and effective? If the partial return to its sources at the time of the Reformation did so much for it, what may we not expect from

the more complete return to the same fountain of life which is going on to-day?

It is in harmony with these great and salutary tendencies that we wish to work. It is our purpose to consider—very imperfectly, from the greatness of the task, the narrowness of our limits, but chiefly from other causes more personal to the writer—the work of Jesus Christ, His teaching, life, and death, in order to see how it stands related to the general modes of thought at present prevailing; how it harmonizes with the best aspirations of our time, and satisfies its deepest needs; how it works amid our confusions, confirming what is true, correcting what is false, strengthening what is useful, and rebuking what is bad.

We propose to do this in the following chapters:—

I. We shall examine Christ's teaching as to God and religion in its bearing on the modes of thought, and the practical needs of our time.

II. We shall set forth, with the same bearing, His teaching as to man and morality.

III. We shall very briefly consider how Jesus Christ stands related to social and industrial questions; the fitness of Christianity, as taught by Christ, to supply the need which, as it seems, will before long arise, of a universal religion; and also the question of evidence.

Finally, in a short Conclusion, we shall endeavour to show the relation of the teaching of Jesus Christ to Christian theology.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that it is not our aim to present a complete and balanced Christology, or even a systematic treatment of any branch of it. We

are not endeavouring to set forth the whole of what we consider ourselves warranted in believing concerning our Lord, but only what the great majority of those who earnestly think about Him, and the human interests which He touches, would be ready to acknowledge: what is contained in those records of Him as to the general authenticity of which there can be no reasonable doubt. It is our purpose to consider those great germinal truths concerning God and man and human life which Christ in His teaching first revealed to men, or clothed with new authority, which He illustrated by His life, and sealed with His death. We believe that they will be seen to be of special application and of inestimable value to the present age. Viewed in this light, they will furnish a new, or rather a renewed, evidence of Christianity. For what can be more wonderful than that one who appeared in the first century should satisfy the deepest needs of the nineteenth, that one who lived in a village in Galilee should be the source of influences which will calm the strife and heal the sores of our great cities? This can hardly fail to lead us to the belief that some aspects of His person and life and teaching would be seen to answer to the peculiar needs of every age, if we knew them as well as we know the needs of our own; and it will suggest that He is the Saviour of man in all times and in all conditions.

May "the Spirit of Jesus," who can "illumine what is dark, and what is low raise and support," vouchsafe His special help!

CHAPTER I

JESUS CHRIST AND RELIGION

I

THE belief in a personal God is fastened too deeply and securely in the human soul to be in any real danger. The mind of man cannot rest until it has found a first and adequate cause. The rational order of the universe must have its origin in an intelligence akin to that which recognises it. The sense of beauty which nature, both on its face and in its recesses, so lavishly gratifies, suggests a spiritual being of whose delights we catch some faint and broken reflections. In man righteousness and love appear; in the degree in which he manifests them he rises in the scale of being; they excite reverence; they have their roots in a mysterious sense of obligation, which implies free will. We instinctively associate them with the Intelligence revealed in nature, and cannot account for their authority but as expressions of a supreme Will. And the only way in which we can conceive the power, reason, righteousness, and love, which we thus ascribe to the cause of all things, acting freely together is such an organic unity as we call personality. These grounds for belief in a personal God are merely an explication of vague, unconscious processes which have been at work in the minds of men in every

age. On these processes the critical intellect may play and raise doubts and difficulties, but it has no real power over them. Like the belief in an external world, the belief in God has a deeper source than mere ratiocination. All the faculties of our nature combine to produce it. As Plato says, God holds the soul by its roots.

Yet it cannot be denied that the belief in a personal God has temporarily lost something of its hold over the general mind. Many causes have contributed to this. The thoughts of men have been disproportionately turned to external nature. The traces of a universal order which have been observed have been supposed to exclude the action of a personal will. The argument from design in the form in which it had been generally presented has been discredited; what were previously regarded as proofs of contrivance are described simply as conditions of existence. The sciences which deal with man have occupied themselves chiefly in tracing his affinities and relationships with lower forms of life and intelligence. Out of these inferior forms he is supposed to have risen by gradations so insensible, that through them he cannot have reached anything essentially higher, but only something more complex than is found in the lower stages. The reality of free will is confidently denied, important qualifications are placed on the authority of conscience,—the two main witnesses for God. Growing mastery over nature has caused men to lose something of that sense of dependence and that awe¹ which are so favourable to belief in God. To these new views and influences men have hardly had time to adjust their minds in order to measure their force

¹ Lotze's *Microcosmus*, vol. ii., p. 384.

and see their bearings ; so that, when a few prominent scientific men confidently affirm that belief in a personal God is no longer reasonable, many, especially among those to whom such a conclusion is a relief, are prepared to follow them.

With the belief in a personal God all those interests are involved which we sum up under the name of religion, and thoughtful minds are beginning to be alarmed at the decline of religious feeling¹ in many of those who have felt the force of the above considerations, a decline which may so easily spread by mere contagion to those who have not. For, according to the law which makes us more sensible of the advantages of what we think we are in danger of losing, men are coming to realise vividly the importance of religion as a social factor, and how essential it is to those social developments which they contemplate with so much hope. Mr. Spencer, indeed, assures us that religion is in no danger at all, whatever may become of belief in a personal God. By religion, however, he means only the emotions, chiefly of wonder and awe, which are awakened by the sense "of an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed," "of which humanity is but a small and fugitive product, a Power which was in course of ever-changing manifestation before humanity was, and will continue through other manifestations when humanity has ceased to be."² Of this religion we need only

¹ Professor Huxley appeared to share this apprehension. "I have been seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling which is the essential basis of conduct was to be kept up in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion without the use of the Bible."—*Critiques and Addresses*, p. 51.

² See Spencer's *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, pp. 839–843 ; *Study of Sociology*, p. 313.

say, that it is not what is meant when men affirm religion to be vital to the existence and maintenance of society. The same remark applies to the more liberal allowance of religious truth, with a garnish of æsthetic sentiment, which the author of *Natural Religion* furnishes from the tables of science and art.¹ Indeed, he himself seems to feel its insufficiency to supply the basis of individual character and of social order and activity.² Comte has attempted to set up a religion of humanity. But it requires us to regard our fellow-men as it is impossible to regard them unless we see very much more in them than Positivism will allow; nor can it be worked without emotions which, as a matter of historical fact, were created by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and which can have no general life, though they may survive for a while in individuals, apart from the acceptance of that revelation. Each of these so-called religions is "a mere limited influence, capable at the utmost only of organising a new sect," not "one of those great atmospheres of thought and feeling which embrace whole lands and continents, and furnish the breath of life to vast populations."³

A more urgent sense of the need of religion, and the utter failure of every attempt made elsewhere to satisfy it, are sure, sooner or later, to turn the hearts of men afresh to Jesus Christ. And in Him they will find complete satisfaction. He confirms the instinctive belief in God; He raises it to a vivid apprehension; He purifies and develops it; and so makes it the basis of a religion which

¹ *Natural Religion*. By the author of *Ecce Homo*.

² See pp. 261, 262.

³ *Natural Religion*, p. 194.

yields all the guidance and support which human life, individual or social, requires.

It is not difficult to see how Jesus Christ vivifies the idea of God which dwells in the depths of every human soul. That idea is often dim, dormant, and ineffective, partly because the sense of responsibility which it stimulates disposes men to withdraw their thoughts from it. Yet it has unlimited capabilities of life and power. Certain feelings, unsatisfied longing, grief, awe, repentance, events out of the common order, arouse and strengthen it. And certain men seem to have a peculiar power of calling it into living action. They are men in whose own consciousness the idea of God is vivid, active, and absorbing, and who have in a high degree the power of communicating their feelings to others. All religious leaders are of this class, those whom we call prophets being pre-eminent among them. As we hear them speak, or read their words, the consciousness of God rises out of the depths of our soul, lives, glows, and operates. They make men listen and look when they cry, "Behold your God!" And in addition to awakening the idea of God, the greatest of them corrected and developed it.

There will be no demur when we say that among those who have rendered to men the priceless service of vitalising the sense of the existence of God, and so making religion a real power in human life, Jesus Christ takes incomparably the highest place. He presents to us a perfect type of moral excellence, displaying every virtue in the highest degree and the most perfect balance. His life is full of beneficent activities, bringing to men the simplest blessing of relief from pain and the highest blessing of moral

inspiration. His death crowned a course of the purest self-sacrifice. In His presence all merely materialistic modes of interpreting man are stamped with frivolity and absurdity. We find, further, that this perfect life is based, as no other is, on fellowship with God: it professes to draw its ideal, energy, and inspiration from God. Unbelief puts many a strain on our credulity; but the strain is unendurable, when we are told that the spring of this perfect life, the convictions which prompt all its activities as the nerves stimulate the muscles in the human frame, are delusions. As we contemplate Jesus, the soul, by one of those flashes of recognition of which Plato speaks, becomes aware of the presence of God. He illustrates, by perfect obedience to it, His own law: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The knowledge of Him is the most effectual antidote to the evil effects of that undue occupation with the physical sciences from which the age is suffering.

II

Men universally believe that they stand in personal relations with some higher power, and to this belief Jesus Christ brings irresistible confirmation. But when we ask what the nature of these relations is, the widest divergences appear. The outward conditions of men, the stage of their intellectual and moral development, the institutions under which they live, determine their answer. Yet these answers all agree in one vital particular. What men call God stands to them in the relation of a ruler. But rulers

are of many kinds : a master rules his slaves ; a king rules his subjects ; a father rules his children. Between a master and his slaves as such there is only the lowest and coarsest tie. He governs them in his own interest ; his commands are the expression of arbitrary will, as are the penalties by which he enforces them ; he does not trouble about their relations with each other, if only the harmony necessary to his service is preserved ; he is obeyed from fear. The bond between a king and his people is closer and less selfish. He has their welfare at heart ; his honour is inseparably bound up with it. He governs them largely by fixed and recognised laws, and treats them according to acknowledged principles of justice. He requires them to live at peace among themselves. The spring of obedience is loyalty. A father is united to his children by the strongest ties of blood and affection ; he rules them entirely in their own interest ; he finds his joy in their well-being ; he cannot be satisfied except they love him and love each other. His authority rests on nature and on love. Roughly it may be said, that the lower religions show an analogy to the first of these forms of rule, the higher religions to the second, the highest of all—the religion of Jesus Christ—to the third.

Among the religions of men before Christ incomparably the noblest was the religion of Israel, which was instituted and developed by lawgivers and prophets under the special inspiration of God. Jehovah, the almighty Creator, whose power was guided by righteousness and tempered by love, was King of the whole earth. But He was in a special sense King of the people of Israel. He had made a definite covenant with them. They were to obey His laws and

render Him certain services, which were largely moral in their character; and He, on this condition, insured their welfare. Each law-abiding Israelite had a place in His favour, and a claim to His protection. He rigorously punished all transgressors, but abundantly pardoned them when they penitently returned to Him. Of this economy the Old Testament is the inspired history. It failed, however, to answer the desires and to realise the hopes of the best men. The people did not fulfil the conditions of the covenant; they were fickle, unfaithful, rebellious. God therefore withheld prosperity and sent calamities. The institution itself, in all but its roots, was destroyed in the great captivity. But these roots were full of tenacious life, and when the captivity was over the institution reappeared. The hard conditions of the time demanded more or less rigid forms. This tendency to rigidity increased as the spirit of the people under misfortune and oppression grew more austere and bitter, so that, when Jesus Christ came, Judaism, though it existed in great vigour, had lost almost all its grace.

But through all this sad history faithful men had cherished in their hearts hopes of a better time, and in its more depressing passages their hopes had put forth the more vigour. Their faith in God assured them that the relations between Him and His people could not end so unworthily. Cheerful visions of a brighter world rose before them, which they painted in glowing colours to inspire and console others. The details of these visions varied with the character of the prophet and the circumstances of his time, but their outline was in all cases the same. By the gracious interposition of God Himself a better order should

be set up, in which the people would offer to God the service of a perfect righteousness, and God would bestow on them abundantly the blessings of peace and prosperity and joy. Though the phrase was not used, it was foretold that a kingdom of God should be established in Zion and spread to the ends of the earth. And very generally, if not universally, it was expected that God would use as His agent in this work of grace a man specially anointed, the Messiah. By the prophetic writings these hopes were kept alive in the hearts of the Jewish people, though they assumed more or less corrupt forms.

Jesus Christ, who never despised the imperfect stages of a great truth, connected His teaching with this general hope. He came "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand."¹ It is difficult to define with any precision the relation of our Lord to the old covenant and its holy Scriptures.² On the one hand, He had for them the deepest reverence. In the Old Testament His soul found its weapon in temptation and its voice on the cross. All His teaching has its germs there; He declares that "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished"; that He has come not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. On the other hand, He treats the Old Testament with the utmost freedom. Whole tracts of it seem to have scarcely any existence for Him; He made a multitude of its provisions superfluous by a single sentence.³ His

¹ Mark i. 14, 15.

² This question is briefly but suggestively treated in Sanday's *Bampton Lectures on Inspiration*, 1893, pp. 406-421.

³ Mark vii. 18, 19.

teaching as to divorce and the Sabbath implies its imperfection. The spirit of one of its most eminent men is utterly alien to His own. He fulfils it by separating the divine kernel from the human husk. In this spirit He treats the teaching of the Old Testament as to the relations of God and man. God is a King, and it is His will to make His kingdom a beneficent reality on the earth. But our Lord purges the truth from the material elements, and frees it from the limitations with which it had been associated even by the most spiritual of the prophets. They had taught that the throne of God would be established in Zion, and that other nations would be blest by fusion or alliance with Israel. The blessings of the kingdom would be largely material, and would depend in part on ceremonial observances. Jesus Christ announces a kingdom which is universal and spiritual. All who feel a sense of need, and turn from sin, and are ready to receive it as a gift of grace, are admitted into it; all who do the will of God by doing justly and loving mercy are its citizens; its blessings are peace and joy, and the vision of God.

Jesus Christ, then, came to give to the religion of Israel its purest and most spiritual form, and thus to make it the religion of all mankind, according to the old prophetic word. God, who has made all men, is the King of all. His will is that all men shall be in deed, as they are in truth, His people, rendering to Him a free service, and enjoying the purest blessings of His love. The kingdom of God is not an idea merely, but is actually founded in the world from the time the first disciples join themselves to Jesus; it shall extend over the whole earth, and shall be consummated in heaven. This conception is

prominent in the teaching of our Lord, and He sets it before the minds of His disciples especially when they pray.

This attachment of His teaching to the best element of the religion of the people among whom He appeared is an essential feature of the method of our Lord. It shows at the same time His regard for the principle of development, the universal law, as it seems, of divine action, and His tenderness for men, whose passage to the truth is thus made easier. When the early Church endeavoured to show that the revelation of Christ was the consummation of the noblest ideas and aspirations of the thinkers of Greece, and that the latter were a divinely ordered preparation for the former, it was following in the Master's steps. And when the truth as it is in Jesus is preached to any people, much will be found in their belief on which it may fasten. It may be seen, and ought to be shown, that the best principles of the religion which has previously supported human life among them receive in Him their perfect expression and fulfilment. This does not mean that we place these religions on the same level as the religion of Israel. It is plain that the people of Israel received a revelation of unapproached clearness and purity. The crowning proof of this is that it was among them, and not elsewhere, that the Son of God appeared. It only means that from no nation has God withdrawn all His witnesses, and that no soul is entirely forsaken by His Spirit. This is not only the specific teaching of Christianity, but is involved in its first principles, as we shall see.

III

Jesus Christ not only confirmed and corrected the previous teaching concerning God which we find in its highest form in the revealed religion of Israel, He also gave to men an essentially higher conception of God by revealing Him as a Father, not merely of mankind as a whole, but also of the individual man.

In the prayer which He taught His disciples He bids them say "our Father." It is precisely here that we should expect to find the purest and highest teaching as to the relationship of God and man. For it is of vital importance to prayer that God should be rightly conceived. The difference between the cry which fear extorts from selfish men and the surrender of the saint, springs largely from the difference in their view of God. Over prayer, the highest discipline of the religious life, the purest truth ought to preside. The Fatherhood of God is not recognised in the invocation of the Lord's Prayer, and then forgotten; it is involved in every petition. There is no name so holy, no rule so desirable, no will so acceptable as a father's. To sustain by food the life he has imparted, to forgive, to lead in safe ways, to keep from evil, are the natural duties of a father. He who has said from his heart "our Father," has already offered all the prayer.¹

No one doubts that Jesus encourages His disciples to think of God as their Father. It is not so generally recognised that He presents God as the Father of all other

¹ The concluding words of the Lord's Prayer are not supported by the same authority as those to which we have referred. See Matt. vi. 13 (R.V. margin).

men. Yet this is made clear by His most characteristic parable. The specific guilt of the prodigal son is that he leaves a father's house and sins in a father's sight; his only hope is that he can appeal to a father's undying love. Such a welcome as he gets can only come from a father's overflowing heart. The deep passion in the words, "this my son," leaves no doubt of God's relation even to the wandering and rebellious.

There is nothing less satisfactory in dealing with a great, vital, organic truth than formal analysis. And yet this is often the only way of showing how large and inexhaustible it is. We may say, then, that in the Fatherhood of God three truths are involved: God has begotten man; He has stamped upon him His own likeness; and He feels for him a deep and tender love.

There is no mystery more inscrutable than that of generation. Part of the father's being gathering into itself by vital processes the materials of the world issues in the individual being of the child. And so from the depths of God man's soul originally proceeds. It organises for itself, out of the materials which lie around, the body by which it communicates with the external world. How all this takes place is the great mystery in face of which both theology and science find themselves at last. To the old question of which creationism and traducianism were watchwords we have given a larger scope. Yet that man owes his origin not to matter or force merely, but to a living personality, is the primary truth of Christianity. God has not simply made man; He has done so by a vital communication of His own being. And if to say that life has arisen out of the non-living finds no support in anything

that can be observed in the secret places where it arises by the keenest instruments of the most patient observers, what can be said for the view that life in its highest forms, in which will, thought, conscience, and love blend together, has come from anything but a living God ?

Clearly connected with this is the second truth, that man bears the likeness of God, that his higher faculties have something in God answering to them. Free will, reason, moral sense, love, in man, have their correspondences in God. Jesus Christ abundantly recognises this. It is as these work their purest effects in men that sonship to God is realised.¹ Fellowship with God by sharing His thoughts and purposes, according with His will, enjoying His love, is, in the view of Jesus, the sovereign good of human nature. The most fatal heresy of our time was that misplaced agnosticism which affirmed that the justice and goodness of God might be something essentially different from justice and goodness in man.

Arising out of these is the third element in the divine Fatherhood ; God loves man as a father loves his child. This love is given not to a few individuals or to a single nation only, but to every man. It is not created by man's goodness, or kept alive by his obedience. It is an eternal energy of God's own heart, inseparable from the vital relations which exist between Himself and men. As such it is indestructible. The perfection of God consists in loving,² and He can no more cease to love than He can cease to be perfect. As a father's heart is stored with love, which the first sight of his child calls out, but does not create, which does not depend for its continuance on the child's attract-

¹ Matt. v. 45.

² Matt. v. 48.

iveness or even goodness, which no offences can extinguish, so it is with God. His love, being the love of a righteous being, assumes different forms according to the moral condition of men; it does not treat the obedient and the disobedient in the same way. Men being what they are, it does not exclude, it rather involves, severe discipline, punishment, and even in some cases final exclusion from the home. But the discipline has an educational end, the punishment is such as could not be spared without deeper injury to the children, the exclusion is in the interests of the household, it is necessary to its peace and to its very existence. This love is full of ministries, from the sunshine and the rain which descend on the fields even of the rebellious to the minute care which counts the hairs on the head of the obedient. It shows itself chiefly in concern for the soul of man, in which his likeness to God consists.

By the Fatherhood of God, then, Jesus Christ teaches that there is a divine element in man; that this reveals itself in man's higher nature in forms which so correspond with the divine life as to allow of fellowship with it; that God feels for man an infinite and eternal love. This doctrine His disciples ought to grasp firmly, ponder deeply, and follow fearlessly to all its issues. Like all high teaching, it is capable of abuse; but this ought not to lead to that distrust of it which has marked some sections of the Christian Church. Its power is inexhaustible. It is the most simple way in which the relation between God and man can be conceived; the second word which a child learns to say is the name of God. At the same time it is the most profound, for no science can fathom the mystery

of generation or explain the secret of a father's love. This relation presents itself to a child as soon as its mind opens, and grows in meaning as youth proceeds ; for the benefits of the father multiply and the appreciation of the child is quickened. And when life removes the son from his father's care, so that he might forget it, the relation is presented to him from another, and even more impressive, side. For he himself becomes a father, and what he once received he now imparts. How many have felt that they never fully knew what fatherhood meant until they smiled on their children's joys, and wept over their children's sorrows, and sacrificed for their children's good, and pardoned their children's offences ! It is a relation of which every man must have experience, either as son or father, or both. It is not an ordinance of society, but of nature. And it must endure through all revolutions. Kings may pass, the necessity of other forms of rule may cease in simpler conditions of society, when each man shall be his own law ; but until human life ends the father abides. And, as we are beginning to realise more clearly, the father not only imparts life to the son, but is also the first to stir within him the higher feelings ; for the nobler features of human character are largely the result of the close, tender, and prolonged relations between parent and child which the long period that passes before a human being can take care of itself allows and requires.

The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is peculiarly acceptable to the minds of men to-day. And this is not simply because it is an agreeable truth, for the present generation has not been backward to receive stern doctrines in other spheres of thought. It is rather one form of that

increasing regard for what is natural which is a general characteristic of this age. Changes in political and social life have made conceptions like king and shepherd appear conventional and artificial, at best metaphors which shed light on aspects of the relationship between God and man. At the same time special studies have brought into prominence the significance, both physically and morally, of the parental relation. When we find working at the very roots of human life a power, more nearly creative than any other, in the closest alliance with the purest love, when we see that power issuing in a relation which is natural in a deeper sense than any other relation, which is essential not simply to the origin, but also to the continuance of life, which is the chief source of the unselfish feeling so vital to society, into which all men are brought by their very birth, which is kept before men through life and becomes more charged with meaning and emotion as life proceeds, are we not compelled to believe that this power has some higher analogue in the spiritual world, and that this relation has some unique significance, that it is the appointed index of the relation in which we stand to a personal God?

We cannot help but ask, Whence did this teaching come? Some of its materials are found in the Old Testament. This inspired record opens with an account of the creation of man. This was effected, it tells us, not by the mere moulding of matter, but by an inspiration of God. It affirms, too, that man was made in the image of God. It also contains a revelation of the love of God. And so we find a certain tendency in it towards recognition of a divine Fatherhood. But this tendency works within narrow limits. God is called the Father of the people of Israel

as a whole.¹ He refers to the king, who is the representative of the people, as His son.² And just as the Old Testament closes the individual Israelite is set in this relation to God.³ But God's Fatherhood was never supposed to extend beyond Israel in any but the vaguest sense. And, even in Israel, it was only one way of conceiving God among others. It was not the conception which controlled the feelings and inspired the prayers of the people. Nowhere in the book of Psalms is God addressed directly as Father. There was not that steadfast sense of love as the sovereign attribute of God which is expressed in the word.⁴ And at no time in their history were the Jewish people farther from the recognition of the fatherly relation of God than in the days of our Lord. From causes which had been at work for several centuries, their religion had taken the gloomy form of servile obedience to a minute and oppressive law.

Jesus Christ drew the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, if we may so speak, from His own heart. From His first recorded words, spoken when He was twelve years old, to His last words on the cross, the name Father is always on His lips. It is probable that the word Abba was retained in the language of the Church because it had been consecrated by His habitual use. This sense of Sonship was the fixed point on which the tempter rested his lever.⁵ The consciousness of the relation in which He Himself stood to God was the foundation of His teaching.

Here the question arises, whether the filial relationship of

¹ Deut. i. 31 ; Isa. lxiii. 16 ; Jer. xxxi. 20.

² 2 Sam. vii. 14 ; Ps. ii. 7.

³ Mal. ii. 10.

⁴ Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i., pp. 184-190.

⁵ "If Thou art the Son of God."

Jesus to God was identical with that of His disciples. Now it is very striking that He never joins His disciples with Himself and says "our Father." There is one passage in which it seems as if this would have been inevitable, if His Sonship had not involved something higher than theirs. He is speaking of His relationship to those who do the will of God. The words mother, and brother, and sister, all joined together, cannot set forth the closeness and tenderness of that relationship. And yet, even at this moment, He does not say "our Father," but "My Father."¹ What this suggests is confirmed by what we find elsewhere. He declares rejection of Himself to be a graver sin than the rejection of the prophets, because He is the "beloved Son" of God.² He speaks as though it were more likely that He should know the secret purposes of God than even the angels, inasmuch as He is the Son of God.³ He also declares that as the Son of God He alone knows, and He alone can reveal, the Father.⁴ There is clearly something more in His Sonship than in that of His disciples. To this point we shall return.

The consequences of this view of the relationship of God and man are many and fruitful. To only one of them is it necessary to refer here. The idea of immortality, of the survival of the individual after death, was not unknown to men before Christ came. Nearly all the nations which made up the Roman world were familiar with it. But it was to the philosopher little more than a bold surmise, and to men in general only a shadowy hope. The reason is that there was no accepted doctrine from which it certainly

¹ Matt. xii. 50.² Luke xx. 13.³ Mark xiii. 32.⁴ Matt. xi. 27.

followed, and on which it could firmly rest. That even the Old Testament does not supply such grounds, is clear from the fact that the belief arose so late in the history of Israel, and never became universal among the Jews. But among those who have learned of Christ no general doubt as to immortality has ever arisen. This is not so much the effect of any authoritative declaration which He made concerning it, as because it is involved in His fundamental conception of the relation between God and men. That in man there is a divine element, that he visibly bears the image of God, and that he is an object of God's fatherly love, are the solid grounds on which the belief in immortality rests. Of course it is impossible to overestimate the effect of the resurrection of Christ in confirming and vivifying this belief. But His resurrection had the closest relation to His own Sonship. It declared Him to be the Son of God with power,¹ because it was a necessary consequence of His Sonship, and of that only. At the same time it is easier to believe it, because it so naturally follows from His divine Sonship that no part of His nature would be allowed to perish. In like manner, it is God's fatherly relation to men which guarantees their immortality. A father does not willingly allow his children to die out of his life. All that the belief in immortality has done to exalt our estimate of human nature, to console human hearts under their bitterest griefs, to raise "the moral temperature of the world," we really owe to Christ's revelation of the Fatherhood of God.

But, while God is certainly the Father of every man, is it possible to say that every man is a son of God? The one seems to imply the other, but it really does not.

¹ Rom. i. 2.

Common forms of speech make this clear. We should say of one who had no love for his children and treated them with neglect, that he was no father, and we should feel that we meant a good deal. The reason is that love and care are of the essence of the relation. In like manner we should deny the name of son to one who did not love and obey his father, for love and obedience are vital to the full idea of sonship. And so, while we are able to say that God is the Father of all men, we cannot say that all men are the children of God. In other words, God realises completely the idea of a Father to every man, but the majority of men realise only partially the idea of sonship. While like God in certain natural features, the likeness to Him morally and spiritually is largely wanting, and they do not love Him or obey His will. This distinction is recognised in Christian theology, which speaks of adoption, of becoming sons, of being received into the family of God. It is also recognised by our Lord Himself. In very significant words He bids His disciples love even their enemies, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."¹ He is their Father, but they have to become His children. This leads us farther into the relationship of God and man.

IV

Our Lord's exalted view of the natural affinity and relationship of God and man was consistent with the fullest recognition of the actual spiritual condition of men. He recognises that deep and radical disorder of human nature which we call sin. Even when He is speaking of

¹ Matt. v. 45.

men under the best natural influences, He describes them as evil.¹ He traces this evil to its roots in the heart, of which He gives us one of the darkest pictures ever drawn.² He declares that the best men need to be converted, and He calls all men to repentance. His prayer instructs His disciples continually to ask forgiveness. The most eminent of them all He compares to a man who had contracted a debt to his lord amounting to millions of pounds.³ His eye detected sin in what others regarded as mere natural impulses: anger and the look of desire were classed by Him with murder and adultery. Doubtless we should have heard more about God's anger against sin, if it had not been sufficiently emphasised by current Judaism.

It has been said that sin in the strict sense is a "specifically Christian notion," an "express and peculiar creation of Christianity."⁴ Perhaps it is better to say that the idea of sin has a depth and seriousness in Christianity which it had not, and could not have, in heathenism, or even in Judaism. The abnormal can only be estimated when we know precisely what is normal. Between God and man the normal relation is fatherhood and sonship. Now, if we consider man as the servant of God, under an obligation to do His will, and with the privilege of living in His favour, we see how far he is from the ideal. But when we regard him as a child of God in whom love ought to be the source of glad obedience and blissful fellowship, we see still more clearly the perversion of his nature and the misery of his condition. This has been

¹ Matt. vii. 11.

² Mark vii. 21, 22.

³ Matt. xviii. 24.

⁴ Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 454.

vividly impressed on men by the life of Christ, the perfect Son, in contrast with the lives of other men. And it is impossible that the fault should be in the Father; it must be in the child. Again, each purer and higher revelation of God discovers new elements of aggravation in sin. The unfolding of God's love supplies the condition of the unfolding of the latent possibilities of evil, just as the multiplied expressions of a father's tenderness may bring out the wickedness of a rebellious son. In this respect the ministry of Christ supplies, as we shall see, a pathological study of human nature. He taught the purest truth, He revealed the highest love, He offered the choicest gifts, of God, and men showed themselves blind, and cold, and irresponsible; they developed a callousness and cruelty of which we should hardly have thought the heart of man capable. In the deep desire of God to overcome the sin of man, moreover, and in the method He followed, the evil of sin, as we shall see, is more fully displayed.

But while He recognises its universality, and by His teaching and life brings out its evil features, Jesus Christ does not give us any theory of sin. There is in His words nothing like a definition of it. He saves us, however, from falling into either of two extremes which beset men who think about it seriously. In the first place, He does not regard sin with mere compassion, as if it were something man could not help, an inalienable infirmity of an imperfect nature, or a necessary stage in a process of development. It is something which He, in whom pity is seen at its highest power, condemns, and calls men to renounce, threatening with punishment both the sin and the refusal to renounce it. Sin, He tells us, may rise to

such degrees of guilt as to be unpardonable and eternal.¹ It is clearly a fault of the will, a failure for which man is responsible. The reality of sin has often been denied in our time. We are told that the sense of guilt arises out of misconception, that for all the shame and pain which compose it there is no real ground in the facts, that the keenest analysis cannot detect the element of freedom in human action which such feelings imply. Surely we have here the most flagrant instance of the common tendency to think too highly of merely intellectual processes. Men all through the ages and all over the world have had the facts before them in their living reality, and not as reproduced for purposes of analysis. A universal conviction has arisen which we call the sense of sin. Because it has been painful, men have tried to get rid of it, but it has persisted. Probably it causes more pain in unsophisticated hearts to-day than it caused in the heart of primitive man. To discredit, on merely critical grounds, this deep, instinctive conviction of mankind is, in the highest degree, unreasonable. Indeed, how has this conviction arisen if it has no solid ground in fact? Has it, in spite of its falsehood, been developed by natural selection, because it was favourable to the survival and progress of those who felt it? Has it been an advantage to form a false judgment? and would it have been a practical injury to know the truth? Into such difficulties men are driven who deny the reality of sin. By fully recognising it Jesus Christ is in harmony with one of the deepest instincts of the human heart.

On the other hand, Christ's teaching as to sin leaves

¹ Mark iii. 28, 29.

upon the mind an impression altogether different from that left by some schools of theology,¹ especially in the more popular forms which their teaching has assumed. His view of children is favourable and hopeful. He declares them to be of the kingdom of God, and recognises in them the dispositions by which it is received. This is far from implying their innocence, but it is farther from representing them as entirely evil. There is also the fullest appreciation of natural goodness, which He regards as the same in principle as the goodness of God, so that it is possible to argue from the one to the other. He contrasts a father's treatment of his children with the evil that often marks his conduct in other relations. He speaks with admiration of the kindly deed of the half-heathen Samaritan. He appeals to the moral judgment of men to corroborate His teaching. Moral distinctions are fully recognised; men are referred to generally as "good" and "evil." Degrees of guilt are measured; for the same offence some will be beaten with many stripes, others with few. It will be better for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum. Lastly, we find Him allowing for ignorance,² for physical conditions,³ for depressing circumstances.⁴ It was never less possible to deny the truth to which theology gives expression in its doctrine of original sin than in the present age. It is only one form of the universally recognised fact of heredity. There is a collective evil for which the responsibility lies on the whole race of man. Of this

¹ "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transactions."—*Westminster Confession*, chap. vi., sect. iv. See Calvin's *Institutes* (ed. 1838), vol. ii., p. 3.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

³ Matt. xxvi. 41.

⁴ Matt. xi. 7-9.

common evil each man inherits his share: it is organised in his nature; it is established in his environment. For this the individual is not responsible; it cannot entail guilt in any reasonable sense of that word. But out of this evil groundwork issue acts in which there is an unmistakable element of freedom, and to which therefore guilt attaches. It is impossible to doubt that this distinction between what is collective and what is individual, so plain in principle, so baffling in practice, which theologians in their love for clear-cut theories have at various times attempted to efface, will be abundantly recognised by Jesus Christ.

Before we pass from this subject a striking fact calls for our attention. Jesus Christ is presented to us as a sinless man. He had the most delicate sense of moral evil, detecting it in its faint beginnings at the bottom of the heart; He looked on anger as other men on murder: yet no confession of sin escaped His lips. When they have done all they can do, He bids His disciples call themselves unprofitable servants; but He never speaks in that strain of Himself. The absence of such confession is the more significant when we remember that humility was a grace on which He set great store, and which He eminently displayed in every form but that of self-depreciation. And the picture in the gospels discovers no fault. The only explanation of this is that there was no fault in the original. It is hardly too much to say that it passes the wit of man to imagine a character at once perfect and lifelike. When each feature is without flaw the face loses its human form. When every act is blameless the story passes unmistakably into the realm of fiction.

But as we read the gospels we feel ourselves to be in the presence of a living man, the indubitable marks of an actual personality impress us in spite of the fact that the circumstances are unique and many of the events miraculous. When, therefore, we find that the evangelists have accomplished what men in other respects more skilful have failed to accomplish, by portraying a character which is life-like and yet perfect in its constituents and its balance, we cannot but conclude that it is because they were drawing from the life.

V

Jesus Christ is set before us in the gospels, not only as personally sinless, but also as the deliverer from sin. He is the Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, the Physician who heals diseased souls, the Redeemer who pays the ransom for forfeited lives. His mission is to bring men out of the false, guilty, and ruinous relation to God, which is the effect of sin, into the true and blessed condition of complete sonship. This is the essential element in His work, to which all His healing and consoling activities are incidental and contributory. No other redeemer of man has ever conceived his task so profoundly, as no other has applied the same resources to its accomplishment. All evil is want of harmony with the conditions of life. The determining condition of the life of man is the righteous, loving will of God; man is in contact with it, in one form or other, every moment and everywhere. Sin is essentially antagonism to this will. The only full harmony with it is the filial spirit expressing itself in filial deeds. In the father's house only the son

can be entirely at home. In seeking to save man from sin, and to make him a son of God, Jesus Christ is striking at the vital root of human evil. No word less wide than salvation can describe His work. And His method is as comprehensive as His aim. He saves man by teaching, example, and sacrifice.

It is not true, as Socrates affirms, that all wrong-doing arises from ignorance, that no man does evil willingly; or rather, it is only true of a few happily constituted and well disciplined men like Socrates himself, in whom reason has complete mastery of passion. Yet the influence of knowledge on human action is undoubtedly great. Our Lord's teaching is therefore an important element in His saving work. In considering it, we cannot fail to be struck by the fact that it is less directed to prudence and calculation than is usual in teaching intended to win men from evil. Of course there are appeals to these powerful springs of action. Occasionally we see the smiling earth open and the benign heaven discharge its thunder to destroy the sinner. Indeed, by piecing together scattered sentences we get perhaps a darker picture of the doom of the impenitent than we find elsewhere. We are also told of the abundant compensations and rewards of the faithful servant. Nevertheless it is true that His teaching, as it stands, seeks rather to win men from sin to goodness by a revelation of the fatherly love of God. The superiority of the latter method is not difficult to see. In the former there is, in the strict sense, no moral quality; its only value is that it prepares the heart to listen, and to yield, to a nobler appeal. But the picture of God as a Father loving His children and doing them good even when they

are unthankful and evil, following them with a lingering gaze as they go into the far country, and meeting them with welcome and pardon when they return "lean, rent, and beggared," stooping to the poor in spirit and the meek, refreshing the weary and heavy-laden, counting every hair of the child's head, and knowing every want of the child's heart, is of quite another strain and potency. It appeals at once to the lowest and to the highest springs of human action. It shows the folly of sin; for every law it breaks is a law imposed by love, a direction given by a Father to His child in order to enable him, in a world which he does not know as yet, to find his blessedness. It brings out with special force the guilt of sin, which is not only defiance of authority, resistance to righteousness, but also an offence against love. It brings home to men the fact that they were made for something better than sin, and the misery which sin inevitably causes, that sin is something false, unnatural, and monstrous. And when the sinner's heart is turned against sin, it fills him with the confident hope of abundant pardon and complete restoration. Finally, it implants that sober sense of dignity which has so much power to purify character.¹

The teaching of Christ in this as in other respects is enforced and enlarged by His life. No spiritual idea or view of the world can be adequately presented to men except in a person and a life. The life of Christ, realising so perfectly all that He taught, stands, in respect to its moral influence, in the same relation to His teaching as a picture does to a description, or as a scene in nature does to a picture. A bank of violets, bright with the dews

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1, comp. with vi. 18.

of spring, filling the air with living odours, is a very different thing from the poet's description or the painter's representation of it. "Things seen are greater than things heard," and Jesus Christ has set the filial life before the eyes of men in perfect deeds. From the glimpse we catch of Him in His radiant childhood, busy among His Father's matters, to the sight of that bowed figure in Gethsemane, taking the cup from the Father's hand, we see a loving and beloved Son of God. It was His meat to do the will of God,—something to which He was driven by an impulse as organic and irresistible as hunger, and which brought Him satisfaction such as a feast brings to a hungry man. He lived in constant fellowship with the Father, a fellowship in which He took refuge, and from which He drew strength. It seems to be drawn closer in the critical passages of His life, and so normal is it, that the only point at which it was interrupted, when He uttered the cry of the forsaken on the cross, has ever challenged the deepest thought of every student of His life. This realised ideal of a human life in harmony with God has worked with singular power in history. Its nobility, showing the perfect ordering of man's nature, wherein the higher qualities always rule, and the lower always serve; the beauty of its goodness, consisting in the perfect balance of conviction and passion, dutifulness and freedom, lowliness and sovereignty, righteousness and pity,—have brought home to men the corruption of their nature and the shame of their lives. Its serenity and joy in the midst of strife and suffering show the deep springs of blessedness to which the soul of man has access, and draw like a charm the weary and the heavy-laden. That such a life should be possible in outward

conditions which for a long period did not differ from the common lot, and when they began to differ only became more difficult, is a constant encouragement to men in their spiritual striving, especially in connexion with the truth we shall meet with shortly, that they may draw on His Spirit.

In another respect the life of Jesus tends to overcome the sin of men. Being in complete conformity with God's will, it was a living revelation of that will. He received His mission from God, and was anointed by the Spirit of God for its accomplishment. He represented God to men when He lived among them as a spring of love and help and comfort. He had compassion on them; He sought and saved the lost; He was the friend of publicans and sinners. The only antipathy aroused in Him was to the spirit of the Pharisees, and that chiefly because they were so loveless and hopeless towards the sinful. There seemed to be no limits to His forgiveness of the penitent. A sinner fresh from a shameful deed, the faintest glance towards which He had condemned, was pardoned on repentance which must have been instantaneous, and was doubtless at once the effect and the condition of the grace.¹ A course of flagrant sin left no traces in His mind to forbid the closest intimacy, the most loving fellowship, with one to whom it had been forgiven.² Sorrow and pain, the extremes of

¹ John viii. 1-11. This passage is unmistakably an authentic tradition of our Lord, though it has probably no right to appear in the fourth gospel. The early Church would neither have desired nor dared to ascribe such an act to Him. But it is entirely in keeping with His character as revealed in the synoptical gospels. The paradox stated in the text is often found in moral relations.

² Luke vii. 36-50. The remark of the text is strengthened if the woman were Mary Magdalene.

which He bore uncomplainingly Himself, when seen in others always touched His compassion and moved His help. That so many of His deeds of love were miracles only connects them more closely with God. Thus in the life of Jesus men may see how God looks upon their sins and sorrows. At the same time, then, that it deepens the shame and sorrow of their penitence, it inspires them with a sure hope. With one exception, the life of Christ in connexion with His teaching has been incomparably the greatest religious force which the world has ever known; that exception is His death.

For it is significant that it is neither on the teaching nor the life of Christ, but on His death, that the New Testament and the Church have laid the chief stress as the means of deliverance from sin. Theories framed by devout thinkers as to the connexion of His death with salvation from sin have never been able to satisfy more than a section of the Church for a little while; but the fact of this connexion the whole Church in every age, following the apostles, has unfalteringly affirmed. This disposes of the objection that it is artificial or arbitrary, or that it does violence to the plain moral sense of men. It also shows us what men instinctively require in a Saviour, and leads us to expect something answering to this requirement in a work so complete as that of Jesus Christ.

Our present task is not to set forth the doctrine of the New Testament as a whole on this matter, but to learn what we can about it from those simple records of the life and work of Jesus of the general authenticity of which there is no reasonable doubt, and which present not a trace of speculative tendencies. Of course we do not look for

any teaching as to His death that can be called doctrinal, for that was not the method of our Lord, nor of the evangelists, whose minds seem to have been entirely subdued to His as they wrote about Him. For other reasons, we cannot expect it to be treated doctrinally in the gospels. Beforehand, the disciples could not be persuaded that it would happen, still less would it have been possible to set before them the way in which it would occur, and all its circumstances; yet, in the absence of such knowledge, how could it possibly be understood? And after the resurrection had exalted them into ecstasy, the minds of the disciples were for a while in no condition to estimate the doctrinal significance of what had taken place. What better method can we conceive than to defer all explanation to calmer days and more reflective moods, as the fourth gospel informs us that our Lord did.¹

The facts, however, as we find them, show the surpassing significance of His death as an element in His work. Consider the space which it occupies in the gospels, and contrast it with the space which the death of Socrates occupies in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon or in the Platonic dialogues. Consider also how the anticipation of His death seemed to oppress our Lord Himself, from the time when His mention of it made His disciples afraid to question Him² to the time when He was so exceeding sorrowful that He prayed that it might pass from Him, at least in the form which it assumed at that hour.³ Consider, further, that it suspended for the only time of which we have any hint

¹ John xvi. 12-14.

² Mark ix. 32.

³ "Let *this* cup pass from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39). See Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii., p. 248.

the communion between the Son and the Father. This communion was untroubled by fear in Gethsemane when He cried, "Father, . . . not My will, but Thine be done." It was unimpaired in the faintness of death when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." But what neither fear nor weakness could do, something effected on the cross before He said, "It is finished." Add to all this, that it is His death which He has kept before the eye of His Church by the institution of His supper, "this most certain of all certain things which have been transmitted to us."¹ He who has shown how lightly He held ceremonies by abolishing one of the most elaborate systems ever practised without putting anything in its place, has in words too tender to be a command, too absolute to be a mere wish, commended to His Church for ever the observance of His death. The words He used on instituting the supper, of which we have reports which differ slightly, are not sufficiently definite to sustain any theory of the relation of His death to sin, but they are sacrificial in form and colour. This must be taken in connexion with the significant fact that not one word of His is recorded in condemnation of the Jewish system of sacrifice, though it was so oppressive, nor to prevent His disciples from understanding the solemn form of institution in a sacrificial sense, as they inevitably must have done, and actually did. The same remark applies also to the significant words which He spoke earlier, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Whatever theory of His death we may adopt, it is

¹ Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, vol. i., p. 159.

clearly impossible for us to exaggerate its efficacy as an element in His work of redeeming men from sin. The cross is the masterpiece of sin, in which its essential features come out with special clearness, its blindness, its perversity, its brutality. It is not too much to say that it was the work of man as such. No single class is responsible for what all consented to,—Sadducee and Pharisee, priest and scribe and common people. It can hardly be ascribed to the special perversity of the Jewish nation. If Jesus had appeared in Athens instead of Jerusalem, He would not have been treated better. This is proved by the fate of Socrates, who had sought by his questions to tease his fellow citizens into thought, and by his reproaches to sting them into earnestness. We know how the first followers of Christ were dealt with at Rome. The crucifixion may be said to be the work of human nature, and as such reveals, as a flash of lightning discovers an abyss, its derangement,—the perversity of man's judgment, and the corruption of his heart. Thus the cross becomes a powerful motive to turn man from sin, for which purpose it is mainly employed in the earliest discourses of the apostles recorded in the Acts.

We are supported by the New Testament when we say that the death of Christ has within it all, and more than all, the moral energy of the life of which it is the consummation. It might have been avoided by unfaithfulness to His vocation, and therefore was in the fullest sense voluntary. We recognise the ideal of human nobility, as we see that holy will subdue the shrinking of all the nerves from the pain, and of all the affections from the shame, of the cross. The goodness which had previously

expressed itself in comfortable words and gracious deeds is displayed in a still more impressive form by enduring agonies because they are the inevitable condition of His redeeming work. The filial spirit assumes its most triumphant and subduing forms as He takes the cup from the Father's hand, and lays His soul down in the Father's arms. The simple truth is, that this death has done more to shame men out of selfishness and self-will, which are the essence of sin, than all the other heroisms of history put together.

But the fact that Jesus endured the cross only because it was in a special sense the will of God, seems to admit us to the secret springs of the divine nature. The culminating point of the vocation of God's well-beloved Son was an act of utter self-sacrifice springing from the purest love. Is it possible to doubt that love is the deepest passion of the heart of God, and self-sacrifice the method by which it works in the sinful conditions of human history? This method of self-sacrifice can only be imposed on God's love by some principle as essential and eternal as itself; it can be imposed only by the justice of God. It is this which makes the cross so powerful a declaration of the divine righteousness. If, as the great majority of the holiest men have gathered from the witness of their moral nature, the righteousness of God requires satisfaction by an indubitable exhibition of itself before it can consent with love in pardon, there can be no doubt that the death of Christ affords such an exhibition, and that the words of Christ are fitted to express it. The cross thus supplies a sure ground of hope to the sinner whom it convicts of sin. This is confirmed by the fact that, in harmony with a principle which we see in operation in human relations at

their best,¹ this act of obedience, so supremely pleasing in the sight of God, has commended to His favour the men for whom it was performed. This is rendered the more possible by the fact that this act of obedience to God was an act of transcendent love to man, and, as such, has availed more than all the other deeds of Christ to bind human souls to Him, and to set to work within them the same principles and forces which determined His life.

VI

Every element in this revelation of God is raised to a higher power by a closer consideration of the person of Him through whom it is made. To this we now proceed.

One view of Jesus would represent Him as only a prophet of special eminence, whom the accident of the crucifixion has clothed with a unique interest and power. This view, however, finds no support in the gospels; indeed, it is distinctly excluded. John the Baptist was "much more than a prophet." "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Of this kingdom Jesus is King, demanding absolute obedience. His name clearly is not written in the roll, glorious as it is, of those who are prophets merely.

This suggestion as to the exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ is strongly supported when we gather into one those conclusions concerning Him which we reached at the end of each of our previous lines of thought. He is incomparably the most powerful witness for God the world has ever known.² He is the Messiah who has crowned the

¹ Mozley's *University Sermons*, p. 169.

² Section I.

most important religious movement of the ages which preceded Him, purifying the highest hopes of its noblest sons, giving them a universal scope, and fulfilling them.¹ He is the Son of God in a sense so unique, that He alone knows and alone reveals the Father, and might be expected to know even what is hidden from the angels.² In a world of sinners He only is the sinless One. In regard to sin, His attitude is altogether different from that which He imposed on His disciples in His teaching and in His prayer.³ Indeed, men are lost sheep, He is the Shepherd; their souls are sick, He is the Physician; their lives are forfeit, He is the Redeemer and the ransom.⁴

With this view of Jesus His whole bearing in the gospels is in perfect harmony. Difficult as it is to sustain such a dignity in the details of common life, among those who eat, and drink, and share the coarse incidents of journeying together, no hint of any failure transpires in the gospels. His disciples wondered, and doubted, and questioned, they even took it upon them to rebuke Him, but it was only because they could not rise to the height of His thoughts and purposes. He delivered His teaching with a calm confidence which the rejection of it by those who were regarded as the scholars and saints of His nation could not shake or trouble. His tone of authority, alto-

¹ Section II. "Aufmerksamer werden wir dagegen schon werden, wenn wir wahrnehmen, was es bedeutete, wenn ein Mensch der Messias Israels sein wollte. Ein solcher Mensch bildete sich notwendig ein, dass sein Dasein und Wirken die Welt vollende, dass die Zwecke der Schöpfung Gottes in seiner Person zusammengefasst seien."—Herrmann, *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott*, p. 67.

² Section III.

³ Section IV.

⁴ Section V.

gether beyond that of the scribes, the most assured of religious teachers, impressed His first hearers, and was just as firm at the end of His life, when to the eye of man everything portended the tragic failure of His mission.¹ Without employing any argument, by a few words, as we have seen, He sets aside what were regarded as sacred provisions of the divine law.² He pronounced freely on the highest matters of human concern, and yet, closer and more critical attention than has been given to any other words of man, through the course of centuries, has found nothing in His judgments to correct. This Jewish peasant displayed, in the highest spheres of human activity, a royalty of spirit, to which for ages the souls of men have bowed. As to the actuality of all this there can be no doubt; the evangelists had not in their minds the materials out of which they could have constructed such a fiction.

But, besides the claims implicit in His tone and bearing, we are confronted by other claims of a stupendous character. We have already shown that the title "Son of God," as applied to Him, expresses a unique relation to God. To regard himself as a child of God is the boldest venture of man's faith. It requires to support it the strong assurances of the Christian creed. The claim is made timidly, and is easily troubled with misgivings. Some wonderful secret must then be hidden in the consciousness of Him who can claim to be the Son of God in a sense so special, that only the Father knows Him, and He only knows the Father. The title "the Son of man" is only less significant. It has clearly a reference to the well-

¹ Matt. xxv. 31, 32, xxvi. 13.

² Mark vii. 18, 19 (Rev. Ver.).

known passage in the book of Daniel,¹ and may be regarded as an assertion of His Messiahship and of His typically human character. What is suggested as to the secret consciousness of Him whose chosen name for Himself is a name which insists on His human features? Does it not seem as if there were some special need that they should be emphasised?—a need which all the following centuries, in which they were so often obscured and lost in the glory of His divine nature, abundantly attests.

In harmony with all this, we find Him exercising functions of transcendent dignity. He makes laws which are to govern the relations of men to one another, and even to control the secret motions of the heart. He takes it upon Him to forgive sins, which clearly belongs only to the God against whom they have been committed. He claims to be the occupant of "the great white throne" from which final judgment is to be dispensed. These awful prerogatives of God are assumed as calmly as a man assumes the most natural and obvious of his rights.

Further, we find that these claims are associated with a series of soberly miraculous events. He did not enter life as other men, nor was He, as other men, swallowed up by the grave. From time to time, to serve the purposes of His love, there were emitted indications of absolute power over the forces of nature, both creative and destructive. It is not part of our plan to dwell on this element in the gospels. But it is impossible not to see how perfectly

¹ Dan. vii. 13. See for meaning of "Son of man," Bruce, *Kingdom of God*, pp. 166-178; Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, vol. i., pp. 60-67. See also Denney, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 35-37.

it fits in with all that we have just observed, at once lending and receiving support.

If all these claims are not arrogant, and some of them even impious,—and it is incredible that the purest religious movement in history should be thus infected in its very roots,—are we not forced to the conclusion that God dwelt in Jesus Christ in a higher degree than in any other man, and in an altogether different way? are we not compelled to see in Him the personal union of God and man, an incarnation such as the doctrine of the Church struggles to express?

It has been said that if this were a fact, it must, because of its surpassing importance, have been so explicitly taught by our Lord as to exclude all doubt. But God nowhere forces Himself on the belief of man. Along with His revelation there is always required an intellectual and moral effort on our part to find Him out. Jesus acted in the same way in regard to His personal union with God as in regard to His Messiahship. In both cases, the facts in which they were implied were set before the eyes of His disciples. In neither case did He anticipate, or, apparently, assist their conclusions. In common with all great teachers, He seems to have attached more value to what men found out for themselves than to what their minds passively received. This is the method underlying the characteristic form of His teaching, the parable. In regard to His divinity, there were special reasons for reserve. How would it have been possible for the disciples to have had that free and familiar intercourse with Him which has been so attractive and so instructive to after ages, if, from the beginning, they had been aware that they

were dealing with God manifest in the flesh? If we may venture to form a judgment on such a matter, what better method can we conceive than that He should have carried His disciples to the very point of recognition, and then have left them to work out the truth under the intimate, organic guidance of the Spirit?

In this way our Lord seems to have acted. The Church, as its first documents attest, was left in no doubt as to the divine nature of its Head. It is implied everywhere, and expressed often, in the earlier epistles of St. Paul. The fact that he never argues for it, as he does for the distinctive features of his gospel, shows that it was the common faith of all Christians. His growth in knowledge, through thought and experience, as shown in his later epistles, consists in a fuller appreciation of the significance and glory of this truth. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the title "Son of God," as applied to Jesus, signifies "a superhuman, eternal, divine being";¹ and this divine Sonship is the common confession of the Church.² The same truth is conspicuous in the book of Revelation. "It ought to be unhesitatingly acknowledged that Christ is placed in the Revelation on a par with God."³ In the minor epistles the divine glory of Christ is used for practical purposes, just as we use truths which no one denies. As to the fourth gospel there is no reasonable doubt.⁴ The first effort of Christian theology was to understand, formulate, and guard this vital and central truth.

¹ Weiss, *Biblischen Theologie des N. T.*, p. 495.

² Heb. iv. 14.

³ Reuss, *History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age* (Eng. trans.), vol. i., p. 398.

⁴ Nothing advanced by Wendt, who affirms a merely ethical Sonship to be the teaching of the fourth gospel (*Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii., pp. 226-230), requires any modification of the above.

To it the Church, all over the world, and all through the ages, has made rapturous confession. It is not our purpose, at any rate just now, to contend for the form which Christian theology finally gave to this truth; we only seek to bring out the fact that the truth itself was not left in any practical doubt by our Lord at His ascension, and that the method He followed is clearly the fittest in the circumstances.

When we accept the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, all the facts of the gospels and of Church history, from the beginning until now, become harmonious and intelligible. It accounts for all the conclusions which we have previously reached. We can understand why He has been so irresistible a witness for God, the altogether unique character of His Sonship, His sinlessness, the simple sublimity of His teaching, the perfection of His life, the singular virtue of His death, His calm confidence, the authority He assumed so naturally, the stupendous claims He made as though they were matters of course. It also accounts for the wonderful facts of Church history, which are, if it be true, the natural effects of an adequate cause, the working of such a divine power in the perverse conditions of human life. Without the divine Sonship, the gospel offers us a riddle instead of a revelation, the character of Christ is full of contradictions, His doctrine is only the dream of a mystic, His claims are little short of blasphemy, His intimate friends were left to found the Church under a complete illusion, Christian theology has been a gross blunder, and Christianity itself a vast aberration.¹

¹ Dr. Martineau largely accepts this view in the disheartening pages which close his latest book (*Seat of Authority in Religion*, pp. 650, 651). He may well confess that it causes him "pain and dismay."

This, then, is the transcendent element in Christ's revelation of God. God has sent His eternal Son, in the form of man, to found on earth a kingdom of heaven; to present before the eyes of men as the ideal of their sonship such an analogue of His divine Sonship as the nature of man and the conditions of human life will allow; to make men feel by the perfection of His life how sinful and unblest they are; to tell them in words, and to show them in deeds, the yearning love and tender mercy of God; and to shed His blood as their ransom. And the aim of it all is that men may be brought into that filial relation to God for which they were made, and in which their true blessedness consists.

Is it too much to say that the present age has been brought by some of its most marked tendencies into closer accord with this truth than any former age? How otherwise can we explain the fact that not only theology, but also philosophy, has shown so deep and special an interest in it?

It has been said "that the most serious objections raised against the incarnation are really of an *à priori* character."¹ But do not *à priori* considerations point the other way? Some have supposed that the vastness of the universe, as revealed by modern science, makes the incarnation incredible. The God of this boundless universe cannot, it is said, have entered into personal union with a single member of a race which occupies a mere speck of space for little more than a point of time. "It seems too strange, too paradoxical, too utterly stupendous, to be true." But even if we admit this view of man, which the very fact of the incarnation rebukes and corrects,

¹ Illingworth, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 163.

the conclusion by no means follows. For whatever raises our sense of the greatness of God applies to all His attributes. The love of God must be as vast and wonderful as His power and intelligence. It is unreasonable to enlarge our idea of the power and wisdom of God without at the same time enlarging our idea of the love of God. To regard the insignificant, to stoop to the lowly, is the peculiar glory of love. And if the love of God is to have an exhibition of itself as majestic as the external world affords of His power,—and love has at least as strong an impulse to manifest itself as power,—what means more fit could it employ? That it has done something that transcends all probability, and staggers for a while all our power of belief, is its very triumph. Unless, then, the vastness of the universe affords some reason for believing that there is no love in God,—a thought which chills the heart, for the wider the universe the more forlorn it is without sovereign love,—that vastness tells rather in favour of than against this supreme manifestation of it.

Never was there an age in which philanthropic ardour was more admired. There is no one whom we so much delight to honour as the rich, wise, and good man who goes to live among the poor, the simple, and the sinful, to do them good. The more completely he makes himself one of them, accepting the limitations of their lot, thinking their thoughts, throwing himself into their interests, sharing their sufferings, and showing goodness in forms which they can understand, the more we admire him. We call such lives God-like, and we are coming to feel that it is only in this way that men can be redeemed. It cannot, then, appear to us unworthy of God to supply, as He does

supply in the incarnation, a creative prototype of such activity.

One of the thoughts most familiar to us is that God is ceaselessly working in the world. We are impatient of that mechanical view of the universe represented by the deism of the last century; indeed, we are in some danger of falling into pantheism in our affirmation of the immanence of God. The forces of nature are modes of divine energy; the laws of nature, forms of the divine intelligence. The world is overflowing with the life of God. This may be said to be the inspiring idea of the best theology, philosophy, and poetry of our time. Such ceaseless divine activity is a revelation of God. Among other methods, many of them still to be discovered, God works by the method which we call evolution. Science hopes to trace the successive steps by which inanimate being emerges into life, wakes into consciousness, and issues at last in a free personality, in which we find, as sovereign principles, righteousness and love. This free personality is at once the object and the highest medium of the manifestation of God, who discovers Himself to it and through it. The revelation of God in the nature and history of man is one of the most frequent themes of recent philosophy. But if the highest form of divine revelation be the life of man, would not *à priori* considerations lead us to look for its culmination in one human life, where we may behold it in unbroken clearness and fulness? Only in this way would God be revealed as perfectly as is possible, in harmony with the idea according to which the world is framed. Such a revealing personality would be a worthy crown of the long course of cosmic development. In this way God would set

before men a living ideal, reveal to them His love, and enter into the closest fellowship with them allowed by their nature and condition. In such a fellowship of thought and love a rational motive for creation may be found. The human mind intuitively requires such a motive, and with such a motive it is satisfied. All this is so true, that it is hard to believe that the incarnation was contingent on the turn given to human development by sin.

But sin undoubtedly supplies special motives to such a manifestation of God. It distorts man's idea of God, not simply because it perverts his faculties, but also because it disturbs the world from which his ideas are gathered. The fundamental structure of human society, in which men are inextricably involved together, essential as it doubtless is to the highest ends, prevents the observance of exact proportion between the sin and the suffering of the individual, and so clouds the exhibition of the righteousness of God. The permission of sin with all the misery it brings in its train casts doubt on the love of God. These principles of the divine nature therefore need some special vindication. By sin, again, the revelation of God through the nature and life of man was greatly hindered. Even in the best men the divine element has been impaired, obstructed, and obscured by evil. Dispositions that are bad have often appeared the most natural to man, and so have been attributed to God. Does it not seem necessary, if God is to be known as He is, that some one pure and harmonious nature should be made the medium of His revelation? Sin in another way calls for special divine interposition. It offends all the attributes of God: His power, because it is rebellion; His wisdom,

because it is irrational ; His righteousness, because it is lawless ; and His love, because it is so deep an injury to His creatures. It must be resisted, and, if possible, subdued. To this end the sinner must be pierced with shame and sorrow ; and what is so likely to effect this as to set the divine life in its graciousness and blessedness beside the ugliness and misery of sin ? And how can the hope, which is so necessary if these feelings are not to crush and overwhelm, be inspired so effectually as by the spectacle of God's love in the redeeming ministries and sufferings of a human life ?

As to the possibility of an incarnation, it has been said with truth that "in speculation there is now a clearer insight into the affinities of the divine and human natures ; . . . the affinities of the natures may be said to be the common principle of our higher philosophies."¹ This affinity is involved, as we have seen, in the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, which men now find it so easy to accept because it is a conception so profoundly natural. It is not, then, too much to say, that the prevailing currents of thought are more favourable to belief in the incarnation than those of any previous period, at any rate of the mediæval or the modern world.

VII

We now reach what is undoubtedly the crowning truth of the religion of Jesus Christ,—that God dwells in man by His Spirit. This truth is not, as many suppose, a mystical addition to Christianity, but of its very essence. In the

¹ Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 472.

religious system which Jesus came to fulfil, it is, so to speak, latent, exciting presentiments, but not obtaining clear recognition. In some of the prophets these presentiments find striking expression. Jesus was announced by His forerunner as One who should "baptize with the Holy Ghost." All the earliest writings of Christianity, both canonical and non-canonical, attest that this divine indwelling was the distinctive element of the Christian consciousness.¹ It would be impossible then to doubt that it had an important place in the doctrine of our Lord, even if fewer express references to it were found in the earliest records. For it is not always the most characteristic truths which occupy the greatest space in the recorded words of a teacher. They often receive little prominence, because they have been so entirely accepted. The indwelling of God is implied in the fundamental doctrine of the divine Fatherhood; for what is the image of God in man, in all its degrees, but an index of His indwelling? and what is sonship but vital participation in the Spirit of the Father? The Lord's Prayer assigns to God such a part in the inward life of His children as implies indwelling, for only thus can He lead them, and deliver them from evil and the evil one. The Father whom our Lord teaches His disciples to address bestows the Holy Spirit as His highest gift.² The very words they are to speak on critical occasions will be inspired by the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in them.³ Against this Spirit it is possible for men to commit an unpardonable and eternal sin.⁴ Jesus

¹ "Every individual was, or at least should have been, conscious as a Christian of having received the πνεῦμα Θεοῦ."—Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, p. 119, note 2 (Eng. trans., p. 141).

² Luke xi. 13.

³ Matt. x. 20.

⁴ Mark iii. 29.

Himself was full of the Holy Spirit, who descended upon Him at His baptism, led Him to be tempted, anointed Him for His ministry, and was the spring of His life and work and doctrine. There can be no doubt that in this respect Jesus is the prototype of His disciples, and that the divine Spirit dwells in them for the same purposes as in Him,—to sanctify, to energise, and to guide,—and thus to fashion them after the likeness of His perfect human nature.

For several reasons, it is less difficult to-day than at many previous periods of human history to believe in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For what is it, after all, but the highest form of what is now so generally recognised, the immanence of God, who is in all things according to their capacity to receive Him? In the inorganic world He is present as energy and law; to animated nature His life is communicated; to man His Spirit is imparted as the supporting principle of personality, free will, and conscience, in which his likeness to God consists. There is no reason to think that the first man was made with all the capacity for the divine which is possible to human nature. If we may judge from analogy, he would be capable of spiritual growth, and every stage of that growth—increased knowledge of God, and a more settled habit of obedience—would bring with it increased receptivity. But by the misuse of his free will man gave a fatal turn to his history. Instead of rising, he fell; instead of development, degeneration set in; false ideas of God, self-will, guilt, fear established themselves in his heart. Human nature was not entirely closed to the divine Spirit by sin; in other words, it did not completely lose the image of God. Man's religious beliefs, the intuitions and impulses of his con-

science, his ceaseless striving towards the ideal, prove that the light of the Spirit has not been entirely excluded nor His influence utterly quenched. But sin caused a contraction of capacity for the Spirit of God, a partial closing of the passages by which He enters the soul, the rise of dispositions which negative His action. The work of Jesus Christ as a Saviour was the clearing of these obstructed channels, the conversion of these resisting dispositions. He imparts truth, and thus opens the mind; He implants trust and love, and so inclines the heart and subdues the will. From this the indwelling of God naturally results. It is, as it is always represented to be, a restoration of the ideal of man, grace working in a very important sense along the lines of nature.

Does not this view explain the two positions, which appear at first inconsistent, so steadily held by Christian theology? One is that a measure of the Spirit has been given to every man, a special measure to the holy men of old; the other is that the Spirit was first given through Jesus Christ to those who believed in Him. The fact is, that a great difference in degree is often equivalent to a difference of kind. The summer, with its light and fragrance and balm, is quite another influence in a house into which it streams through open windows and in one into which it struggles through rifts in the shutters and crannies in the walls. When a man, at the prompting of the Spirit which in a measure already dwells in him, receives the revelation of Jesus Christ, and by the giving of his heart and the yielding of his will becomes a son of God indeed, his spiritual capacity is expanded, his nature is thrown wide open to God, and a far larger inflow of the divine Spirit

becomes possible. Every increment of Christian knowledge, every drawing of the will towards complete surrender, makes an ever more abundant communication possible, until man is "filled with the Spirit," and becomes, to the full extent of his capacity, a "partaker of the divine nature." There can be no doubt that the great change which has taken place in the general view of the relation of God to the world has been very favourable to the fuller recognition of the work of the divine Spirit, so observable in the Christian thought and experience of the present day.

At the same time, psychological research is beginning to discern how one personality lies open to another, which under certain conditions may enter, possess, and dominate it. The phenomena, which are only just beginning to be studied in a scientific way, are very intricate, and are further obscured by delusion and fraud; but the direction in which they point is clear. In this region, too, the conclusions of natural science are likely to vindicate Christian theology.¹

It is not difficult to see how the indwelling of the Spirit is the consummation of the work of Jesus Christ. What we have seen to be His great aims, it accomplishes in the most vital and intimate manner. It establishes in man the kingdom of God; it makes man a son of God; it fashions man after the pattern of the perfect revelation of God in the incarnation; and in this way it makes him a partaker of the nature and blessedness of God.

VIII

The Christian life has its root in surrender to Jesus Christ. It has often been remarked that the place of

¹ See James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i., pp. 393-400, vol. ii., pp. 593-601. Of course we cannot accept Mr. James' view of personality.

Jesus in Christianity has no parallel in any other of the great historical religions; and the reason is plain. Jesus is not merely a prophet, who leads men to God, and then fades away in the glory he reveals; He is God manifest in the flesh. His teaching is the pure, unmingled truth of God; His commandments are the will of God; in His life and death the righteousness and the grace of God work harmoniously together to set before us law and love in living forms at once impressive and attractive; He imparts the very Spirit of God. Christian theology, beginning with St. Paul, has strained metaphors to express the relation of Jesus to the Church, and to each individual member. In such representations our Lord Himself led the way. To say nothing of the figure of the vine and its branches, which we find in the fourth gospel, this truth is from time to time impressed on the heart, afresh melted to receive it, in the Holy Supper. As the bread and wine pass with their nourishing and gladdening virtue into the very flesh and blood of those who partake, so Jesus enters and works most intimately and vitally in the mind and heart and will of those who yield themselves to Him. We cannot close this chapter without indicating briefly the forms assumed by the life thus produced.

We may say at once, that the Christian life is from beginning to end a response to the fatherly love of God as displayed by Jesus Christ. As men are sinners, it manifests itself first of all in repentance. This repentance may have its source in mere hunger for the provisions of the father's table, but it rises into a clear perception of sin in the father's sight. The fear of perishing may

first turn the thoughts towards the father's house, but it is the father standing at the door who draws the steps of the returning son. The sorrow of penitence arises when man feels that, though he was made to be a son, he has fallen by his self-will and perversity into a lower condition than that of a hired servant. On sin there is thus placed the stamp of folly and the brand of guilt. The manifestation of the beauty and nobility of sonship in the life of Christ, as we have seen, stimulates this sorrow. The element of hope in repentance is produced by the readiness of God, as declared and exhibited by Jesus, to receive and pardon the sinner. As long as sin continues in the child of God, it is followed by repentance, which ever becomes keener and more tender as the fatherly love of God is more fully realised.

Faith is still more clearly a response to God's paternal love. It is implicit in repentance, but it becomes explicit when a penitent sinner attains a definite conviction that he may be saved from sin by the free action of God's love in Christ. Faith is the essential condition of the Christian life at every stage, for without it the love of God cannot work in the heart of man. Unbelief excludes grace, as the closed eye shuts out light.

On the penitent and believing sinner forgiveness free and full is bestowed. The consciousness of having been forgiven is vital to the Christian life. It occasions the sense of sonship, and implants in the soul a powerful spring of action,—grateful love. It is often said to-day that forgiveness is impossible, because it supposes such a change in God and in the order of the world as cannot, and evidently does not, take place. But if God is a

living personality in moral relations with men, such a change in His feelings and attitude towards them as forgiveness involves must follow such a change in their feelings and attitude towards Him as is involved in repentance and faith. Nor does forgiveness mean that the consequences of sin in the physical order are reversed, but merely that they lose the character of punishment, and acquire that of discipline,—a change which is very largely the result of the fact that they work no longer on an estranged or servile, but on a filial spirit.

When through forgiveness man is brought into right relations with God, and faith is confirmed, and love is awakened, then through these open channels the Spirit of God, of the Father and the Son, flows, as we have seen, into his heart. That process, not so purely figurative as we imagine, which we call catching the spirit of a man, is not so utterly unlike this divine operation as to deprive of all significance the fact that the spirit of one man takes possession of another as the result of intimate relations and through the channels of faith and love. The Spirit of God, who, as the gospels show, inspired and moulded the human nature and life of Jesus, and thus presented us with a perfect pattern of human life, works in the Christian man after the same manner, so that the Christian life becomes an *imitatio Christi*, not so much as the result of deliberate copying, as by the inward working of a common spirit. The forms of the Christian life will therefore, as far as they are authentic, correspond at every point with the life of Christ.

Humility is a characteristic quality of all who have learned Christ. Jesus Himself was “meek and lowly

of heart." He chose a humble condition, and so concealed His life until the call of God drew Him at thirty years of age into the public eye, that only a single record of His youth has survived. He stooped, without a trace of condescension in His manner, to the lowly and the sinful. His antipathy to the spirit of the Pharisees arose largely out of the fact that they sought to exalt themselves and "despised others."¹ He everywhere demands and extols humility. One who seeks to fulfil His law and to be like Him; who lives ever in the eye of God, as a child in his father's sight; who when he prays asks for the forgiveness of his trespasses, and receives it as a gift of grace; to whom all men are brothers, because they share the likeness, regard, and love of the common Father,—becomes incapable of pride. The distinctions of human society which inspire and feed pride seem to Him as superficial and transitory as they really are.

The sense of God's fatherly love produces another element of the Christian spirit,—trust. This trust leads the child of God to take the commandments of God as unerring directions for his conduct, and the appointments of God as sure provisions for his good. It delivers him from anxiety; for, while he seeks God's kingdom and righteousness, he is as certain to be fed as the birds of heaven, and as certain to be clothed as the lilies of the field.² It rebukes and casts out those "eating cares" which so often torment men in the complex conditions and the artificial and self-indulgent ways of modern life.

This trust is expressed and preserved by that fellowship with God which is the essence of prayer. Jesus

¹ Luke xviii. 9, 14.

² Matt. vi. 25-34.

Himself set the example of prayer, early in the morning, late in the evening, and all night long.¹ He so evidently drew from it composure and strength, as to lead His disciples to beg that He would teach them also to pray.² It is supposed by many that prayer in some way conflicts with the reign of law under which we certainly live, that it belongs to an unscientific stage of thought which we have outgrown. But true prayer involves no lawless action. It only supposes that the world is ruled, and that men are loved, by a free Personality, who acts according to wise and righteous laws, which we are unable to discover because of the feebleness of our understanding and the limitation of our knowledge. Prayer, according to Jesus, is the express opposite of that covetous self-will with which it is too commonly confounded. If He said to His disciples, "Ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you,"³ it is only on condition that they abide in Him, and His words abide in them; that is, as they pray in harmony with His directions, and at the prompting of His Spirit. How they will be led to pray under those conditions we see from the pattern prayer which He has left us. From it all irregular desire is utterly excluded. It has gone far before any personal blessing is asked beyond what is involved in the hallowing of the Father's name and the spread of His benign rule. And when personal petition is made, only the simplest things "that pertain unto life and godliness" are asked: bread for to-day or at the utmost for to-morrow,⁴ forgiveness, and

¹ Mark i. 35 ; Matt. xiv. 23 ; Luke vi. 12.

² Luke xi. 1, 2.

³ John xv. 7.

⁴ Matt. vi. 11 (see margin of Revised Version).

deliverance from evil. No doubt the filial spirit does encourage us to ask in "free and familiar intercourse with God" the things that we desire; but, at the same time, it sets us in an attitude of complete submission to His will. Its last word is that in which Jesus Himself uttered the prevailing desire of His own oppressed heart: "Howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt."¹

Closely associated with this trust are the precious blessings of peace and joy and hope. When a man renounces the false and fatal independence which sin involves, and becomes a son of God in the full sense, and takes the Father's will as his only law, he finds his right place in the universal order. This harmony with the order of the world has often been described by philosophy as the supreme end and sovereign good of man, now under the form of "living conformably to nature," and again under the form of obedience to law. To one who is in filial relations with God such consent ceases to be a dictate of hard necessity, or a cold counsel of enlightened prudence, and becomes free and glad. The sense of being in the grasp of forces undirected by thought and untouched with feeling, which appals and paralyses all who fairly face the conception of a merely mechanical universe, is taken away. The forces of the universe are in a Father's hand, and the laws of the universe express a Father's will.² Without shutting his eyes to the intimations of science as to the part which struggle and suffering play in the evolution of life, he can still look on animated nature with

¹ Mark xiv. 36.

² Bagehot says that the "confidence in the universe" which is a characteristic of the "better religions," has been an important element in progress.—*Physics and Politics*, p. 216.

delight, as Jesus did, because he knows that not a sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed by the Father's eye. Out of this reconciliation with the universe issues a deep and settled peace. Such a peace has no affinity with the Stoic apathy, which is a philosophic hardening of the heart, the stillness of a frozen sea. It is the express negation of pessimism, that disease of modern thought which is speculative rebellion against the constitution of the world. It is fellowship in the tranquillity of God, so deep, so positive, so ardent, as to be scarcely distinguishable from joy.

Hope is little more than trust looking forward. One of the most characteristic words of Jesus is, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."¹ The main sphere of Christian hope is the immortality which Jesus brought to light, largely through the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God. No earthly condition corresponds entirely with the dignity of a son of God, or realises the full glory of the kingdom of God. Heaven, where God is enthroned, and where His will is perfectly done,² is the final home of all His children. As to the outward conditions of the immortal life in heaven, the greatest reserve is shown by Jesus. The mind of man is so unstable in its balance, so easily intoxicated, that the sober life of toil and self-denial which He imposed on His disciples, for their probation and discipline, would have been made almost impossible if He had excited the imagination, as some religious leaders have done, by descriptions of the heavenly state. Indeed, as it is, Christianity has often been accused of "other-worldliness."

¹ Luke xii. 32.

² Matt. v. 34, vi. 10.

In simple, calm language Jesus speaks of it as "the world to come," and calls its chief good "everlasting life." But of all blessings life is the simplest, deepest, and most comprehensive,—the secret of efficiency and joy. It is life, "more life and fuller that we want." Notwithstanding His reserve, however, the religion of Jesus has always been a spring of hope, which has made the ills of human life endurable, and transformed the "last enemy," death itself, into a friend.

To possess the soul in patience under the trials of life, in the strength of a heavenly hope, has frequently been represented in recent times as a false and despicable state of mind. In many quarters impatience has been vehemently preached by men who tell us, in the teeth of all history, that Christianity has acted like a narcotic on the progressive impulses of mankind, "lulling individuals and classes into condoning their sufferings here by holding out imaginary hopes of bliss hereafter."¹ But this is to take, as we shall see more clearly in the next chapter, a partial and one-sided view of it. Its effects are manifold and balanced: while it tranquillises, it quickens; while it inspires resignation, it stimulates activity. The first impulse of the true Christian is to redress the ills of human life. After he has done all in his power, and unhappily it is very little, he falls back with the confidence of a child on the ultimate issues of the paternal government of God. Modern philanthropy will need for its arduous task the firm patience that comes from the

¹ E. Belfort Bax, *The Religion of Socialism*, p. 33. He tells us elsewhere (p. 52) that socialism "utterly despises the 'other world' with all its stage properties." Human life is hardly rich enough for such contempt. We need add nothing to what we have said as to "stage properties."

confidence that it is working together with God, the Father of all things; and when it has done its utmost, there will still remain much in the lot of man requiring the cheerful patience which can only be supported by the Christian hope.

The most characteristic element of the filial spirit is love. The highest outcome of the work of Jesus Christ is, that He has made it possible for men to love God as He Himself did. In the earliest religions of nature, which for the most part "reflect and record man's lot on the earth," the prevailing element is terror. The latest religion of nature, the worship, "mostly of the silent sort," of the Unknowable, is little more than a petrifying awe. It has often been said that in the religion of Israel the fear of the Lord held the place which the love of God occupies in Christianity. Of course, we do not forget that from the Old Testament Jesus drew the first and greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."¹ But actual religious life under the old covenant, as reflected in the Psalms, shows us that the commandment went beyond the ability of the devout heart. In that tender passage in Psalm ciii., where God is compared to a Father (which is very different from being called a Father), He is set in relation, not to those who love Him, but to "them that fear Him."² And the reason is not far to seek. It is easy in some exalted mood to impose a law or a counsel of perfection; but constant influences are required to mould a character. God was not revealed in the Old Testament in such a way that the

¹ Mark xii. 30.

² Ps. ciii. 13.

predominant element in the response to His revelation could possibly be love. God was in heaven, and men on the earth; He bestowed rewards and punishments with a sovereign hand; His very pardons were regal in their character. He hardly came within the reach of an emotion so homely as love. But when God became man, and looked at us through human eyes, and touched us with human hands, and shed His blood to save us, He offered Himself to the embraces of love. This fact has become so familiar that we have lost our sense of its wonder. But to dwell for a while on the impassioned formula of the early Church, as we find it in the salutations of St. Paul's epistles—"God our Father"—will restore to us this lost sense. It is the boldest phrase that man's daring mind has ever formed. It intimately joins together all that is awful and all that is tender, the transcendent and the familiar, the heavenly and the homely; it shows us the Almighty and the Infinite encircled by human arms. The love which Jesus has enabled and encouraged us to feel for God works to the same ends as trust, only more vitally and potently. Trust is cold, love is ardent; trust is mainly self-regarding, love loses itself in another; trust is the ground of peace, love the spring of joy. Gladness, so marked a feature of the Christian character, according to the New Testament, is only the inward working of love, with which it is generally associated. And love is the most natural and powerful of all motives to obedience, from which it entirely takes away constraint and reluctance.

This leads us to the practical manifestation of the filial spirit,—the service of God. Of this, again, Jesus is the perfect example. To do God's will was the sovereign

impulse of His nature, discernible when He was only twelve years old, and triumphant at the end. He represents it, with what it involves, as the spiritual bond of the family of God.¹ In the child of God obedience to the Father is the outcome of the principle of trust and the passion of love ; it is the plainest dictate of self-interest and the highest delight of the soul. It matters not how the Father's will is ascertained,—by the intuitions of conscience, the experience of life, the inductions of science, or the declarations of the written word ; nor what form it assumes, whether the simplest laws of physical health, or the inspired impulses of the saint under sacramental influences : when it is known, it is done with the full consent of the filial heart. The ultimate will of God is, from the very nature of the case, His own glory. And so Jesus bids His disciples so to act as to “glorify your Father which is in heaven.” But in the religion of Jesus a higher conception of the character of God than we find elsewhere results in quite a different way of conceiving His glory. For the glory of God is, on His part, the manifestation, and, on the part of His creatures, the recognition in thought and deed, of His inward nature. When the Deity is supposed to be manifested chiefly under forms of power, He is glorified by terror, as shown in painful and cruel sacrifices ; where He is clothed in unapproachable majesty, He is glorified by awe, as shown in solemn rites ; where love is His sovereign attribute, He is glorified by responsive affection and hearty obedience. And as in the last case the glory of God is the manifestation of His love, it is realised in the good of His creatures, which Christian

¹ Mark iii. 35.

theology has often declared to be, interchangeably with His glory, the highest end of the divine action. It is therefore, as Jesus Himself tells us, by acts of love, "good works" wrought in the sight of men and for men, that His disciples glorify their Father.¹ The outward forms of religion, then, according to Jesus, are the reflection of God's character and the response to His love, which are manifested chiefly in the service of others, lowly, it may be, as faithful work in some humble trade, which Jesus Himself did not disdain, or lofty, as enduring the cross in order to save men. This leads us to the next chapter.

The religion which Jesus Christ inspires by His revelation of God and by His Spirit, and perfectly illustrates in His own life, has its roots in humility and trust, finds its flower in love and joy, and bears its fruit in kindly and serviceable deeds. Its soil, sunshine, and atmosphere are the fatherly love of God. This is the ideal, towards which the actual Christian life, often beginning, through the tender mercy of our Saviour, in very rudimentary forms, is an ever closer approximation. No words can express how profoundly the religion of Jesus Christ differs from the customary, ceremonial, legal religions of the antique world which it displaced. At the same time our Lord recognises the social nature of man and his need of outward and visible support, by the institution of His Church for its common manifestation and promotion. Its full realisation is the beatific vision, everlasting life, the heavenly state.

¹ Matt. v. 16.

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST AND MORALITY

THE subject on which we are about to enter has the closest and most vital connexion with the subject of the preceding chapter. Christ's view of man, as we shall see, rests at every point on his view of God; Christian morality draws all its life from the Christian religion. Indeed, they are essentially one: the same spirit looking towards God is religion, dealing with man is morality. The great aim of every ethical theory is to plant morality deep in the nature of things. In regard to this supreme concern of the human race, nothing will suffice but the certainty that it has its roots in the primal grounds of being. An attempt has recently been made to show that the sense of obligation, with all that it involves, is an outcome of the evolutionary process, as well as a condition of its continuance. The results of this attempt have been disappointing, as Mr. Spencer himself confesses.¹ Indeed, Professor Huxley tells us that morality is the arrest, and even the reversal, of the cosmic process.² It has not been difficult to show that morality is involved in the very existence of society; but this hardly goes deep enough, especially in an age in which the existence of society itself needs justifying.

¹ Spencer's *Principles of Justice*, Preface.

² *Romanes Lecture*, in vol. ix. of his works; with Prolegomena.

Moralists of another school have descended into the depths of human nature, and have discovered a faculty which issues inexplicable imperatives, "a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so."¹ This faculty, by the majority of those who recognise it, is regarded as an indubitable witness to a moral Ruler, whose nature is the ultimate ground of moral authority. Jesus Christ rests all moral obligation on the will, or rather on the nature, of God. And not on a God who is merely a postulate of the moral faculty, and from whose nature therefore nothing can be drawn to enrich its contents, but on a God independently known, from the riches of whose being new principles and forces may be derived to regenerate morality, giving to it a power, certainty, and range unknown before. The best rules of conduct previously acknowledged were powerfully reinforced. The vague relentings and misgivings of the nobler spirits before evils not yet recognised as such were justified; their wavering presentiments of a more excellent way were confirmed. Affections previously confined to the family were extended to mankind. Moral sentiments purified and perfected ceased to be mere quivers of emotion in the breasts of men; they were seen to be attributes of the divine nature, principles of the divine government. The deep feelings which a new revelation of God excited became the springs of moral action; offences against men took on the graver form, the darker hue, of sins against God.² If the charge made against Christianity that it has

¹ Butler, Sermon ii.

² "Morality by itself is not wide enough, not potent enough, nor sufficiently systematic. . . . Morality does not include a complete philosophy of life. It does not fire the imagination, standing between man and

been so entirely occupied with the service of God as to neglect the service of man were not untrue,¹ it would be a proof of the most complete departure from the mind of Christ, to which even the distinction is utterly foreign.

I

In order that at the outset we may have our foot on reality, let us consider a case which actually occurred. That it deals with a matter comparatively insignificant makes it the more serviceable for our purpose; for moral action consists very largely in the application of great principles to little details of conduct. How the blood circulates in the small and distant veins is the best test of the strength of the heart. There was a section of the early Church in Rome which refused to eat flesh. Of this refusal the reasons are uncertain; it may have been the manifestation of an ascetic tendency lingering among converts from a school of philosophy such as the Neopythagorean or from the Jewish sect of the Essenes. It is more probable that they abstained from fear lest they should be betrayed into eating what had been polluted by having served as a sacrifice to idols.² This party seems to have been treated with a measure of contempt by a majority of the members of the Church, who had as yet only imperfectly learned Christ.³ The question came

the world, explaining the world to man, dominating the whole nature, and filling the soul with awe, love, devotion."—Frederic Harrison, *The Centenary of the Revolution*, p. 13.

¹ *The Service of Man*. By J. Cotter Morrison. A book altogether unworthy of the author of the *Life of St. Bernard*.

² Beet, *Romans*, p. 349.

³ Rom. xiv. 10.

before St. Paul. There was every temptation to carry matters with a high hand; the scrupulous party might have been thought too weak in numbers to demand consideration, and too weak in mind to deserve it. With their scruples the large-minded apostle had no sympathy; his judgment rested on broad principles, beside which these scruples seem ridiculous. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." "Meat commendeth us not to God." "No idol is anything in the world."¹ But where we look for condemnation, we find only consideration. So far is St. Paul from sharing the contempt of the stronger for the weaker, that he is ready to carry concession to the extreme point of personally abstaining from flesh altogether. The object is not only to preserve the conscience of the weak man from an injury the effects of which cannot be measured, but also to spare his feelings.² This tender and delicate regard for the conscience and the feelings of the weak is a distinctively Christian emotion. In St. Paul's case it seems to have owed nothing to natural temperament; when he first appears before us, the striking features of his character are intolerance and violence.³ The schools in which he had been taught Pharisaism and Stoicism had nothing to do with it. Indeed, they were similar in this as in many other points,⁴ that they both fostered that pride which regards with contempt the ignorant and foolish.

How essentially Christian is this delicate regard for the feelings of the weak we see clearly when we lay bare what underlies it. There is a whole plexus of views and sentiments and obligations at its root. Even the weakest

¹ Cor. x. 26, viii. 8, 4.

² Rom. xiv. 13, 15, 21.

³ Acts ix. 1.

⁴ Josephus notes the resemblance of the Pharisees to the Stoics.

and most narrow-minded of men is to the apostle a sacred object, a work, building, temple of God;¹ he is an object of love, a brother;² toward him, as one for whom Christ died, the apostle feels himself under the most tender and constraining obligation of service.³ Any unselfish regard shown to him is acceptable to God, in whose sight contempt for the weakest of His children is an offence;⁴ it is following in the steps of Christ, who pleased not Himself.⁵ Any other conduct will meet with condemnation and punishment, when we all come to stand at the bar of God to be judged by Jesus Christ.

We shall not be far wrong if we generalise from the conduct and feelings of one who had drunk so deeply of the spirit of Christ the essential elements of the moral ideal which Christ introduced, illustrated, and sanctioned. It consists in a new view of man, a view which is involved in the precept, "honour all men";⁶ in a new sentiment towards man, love; in a new sense of obligation to self-sacrificing service. The first is the Christian spirit informing the intellect and its judgments; the second is the Christian spirit inspiring the heart and its emotions; the third is the Christian spirit ruling the will and its impulses.

In saying that these feelings and obligations were the creation of Jesus Christ, we do not, of course, mean that men had not been respected and loved, and that no signal acts of self-sacrifice had been performed before Christ came. Within the circle of family life these feelings had been cherished and these obligations recognised, just as delicate

¹ Rom. xiv. 20.² Rom. xiv. 10, 13, 15, 21.³ Rom. xiv. 15.⁴ Rom. xiv. 18; comp. ver. 3.⁵ Rom. xv. 3.⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 17.

flowers, which will not grow widely, are found in warm and sheltered nooks. And from the family they had been transplanted, though in an enfeebled form, to the state, which ancient thought regarded as an extension of the family. They were the secret of that *Halt* without which, as Goethe says, societies could not hold together. But they went no further than the state. The maxim of the Jews was, Thou shalt love thy neighbour (with a very restricted definition of the word), and hate thine enemy. Plato in this respect represents the best morality of the Greek race. It is to him proof of a noble and liberal spirit in his countrymen to regard themselves as natural enemies of the barbarians, that is, of the races which were not of Hellenic blood.¹ The extension of Roman dominion, which made men of many races fellow subjects, demanded an extension in the range and an increase in the energy of these feelings; and Stoicism, the noblest system of ancient morals, had laboured to promote this extension and increase. It declared all men to be fellow citizens of the world, and even enunciated the doctrine of human brotherhood. But this was a mere reflection of the existing facts of history, as Zeller declares all philosophies to be.² As we shall see, the paradoxical, inconsistent, and unnatural doctrines of Stoicism supplied no basis for such assertions; it had no power to touch the general heart; it only influenced directly a few choice spirits of a certain mould. The average man could no more become a Stoic than he could hold hot iron in his hand. With that timeliness always to be traced in the arrangements of Providence, Jesus Christ

¹ *Menex.* 245 ; *Repub.* 470.

² Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, p. 309.

came at this juncture, and formed a society, the fundamental law of which was to honour, love, and serve all men. He taught that these were duties not merely to men standing in certain recognised relations, domestic, social, and national, but to men entirely stripped of all claims to consideration, reverence, and love arising out of such natural relations,—in a word, to man as man. At the same time He brought into human life new motives, fresh forces. The world in the present day, which resembles the world in the first century in the fact that it is enlarging, and that men between whom there are no natural bonds are being brought into contact, is in urgent need of understanding these duties, and being stirred by these motives and forces.

II

To honour all men, or, rather, to honour man as such, is probably more difficult to-day, on any other than religious grounds, than it has ever been before. It is a strange result of the scientific movement, in which the human mind has displayed such wonderful skill and power in reading the secrets and mastering the forces of nature, that man has seemed to be degraded in the scale of being. The sciences have appeared to combine in assigning to him a lower place than he previously thought himself to occupy. Astronomy has shown us that the earth, with all its living freight, is only a speck in space. Geology has shown us that the whole recorded history of man is but a point in time, a brief stage in the development of this little world. Biology has affirmed that the body of man is connected by unbroken links with the lowest forms

of animal life. Psychology has endeavoured to trace "the thoughts that wander through eternity" back to the first quivers of sensation in the lowest mollusk.¹ Moral systems have been in vogue which have reduced conscience to little more than an organ which registers how the balance falls when pleasures and pains are weighed against each other in the scales of experience. Free-will has been treated as an absurdity;² a scientific teacher of great repute has suggested that man is an automaton, whose consciousness has no more to do with his actions than the whistle of the engine has to do with the motion of the train.³ Religion is affirmed to be a subtilised form of the belief in ghosts, which is itself largely a result of the dreams of aboriginal man. A doctrine, which plays a great part in the theory of evolution, tells us that there may easily come to be too many men, and that some of the most deadly processes in nature are provisions to keep the number down.⁴ The study of primitive man is supposed to prove how low the beginnings of our race actually are, and to confirm the foregoing estimate. And worst of all, art, which is called to something nobler, has conspired with science; for is not the prevailing realism disproportionately engrossed with the lower and more animal sides of human nature?⁵ All this, of course, has not as yet produced its full effect. The generality of men are nearly as much behind-hand in their

¹ Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 503.

³ Huxley, *Collected Essays*, vol. i., pp. 244-250.

⁴ Malthus, *Principles of Population*. The struggle for existence is only the doctrine of Malthus applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms.

⁵ A recent writer puts this point tersely: "L'homme est diminué à ses propres yeux. Voilà le grand résultat négatif du développement scientifique."—Wagner, *Jeunesse*, p. 17.

practical philosophy as Burke said they were in their politics. Nor can the effect of any doctrine be judged at first, while it acts on men formed under other influences, which modify its action. But there can be no mistake as to the tendency of this teaching unless it is counteracted.¹ Certain checks are supplied by the conditions of our time. Man's enlarging knowledge, his advancing conquest of nature, the growing power of the masses, the greater political value of the common man, theoretical equality before more equitable laws, tend to increase the consideration shown even to the lowly. But these cannot permanently resist the tendency of science. Nor can the suggestion of the wonder and mystery which attach to matter and force, the elements of his being, support the dignity of man.² The only grounds on which it can rest are those which the Christian religion, that is, Jesus Christ, supplies.

Human nature cannot but be a sacred thing to every believer in Jesus Christ. The fact that such an One as He should have arisen among the common people, and should have taught truth so high, and lived a life of perfect beauty, sheds lustre on the meanest member of our race. Man is clearly greater than he knows. "Is it not the best

¹ "No doubt this conflict between a creed which claims intellectual assent and emotions which have their root and justification in beliefs which are deliberately rejected, is greatly mitigated by the precious faculty which the human race enjoys of quietly ignoring the logical consequences of its own accepted theories. . . . Nevertheless, the persistent conflict between that which is thought to be true and that which is felt to be noble and of good report, not only produces a sense of moral unrest in the individual, but makes it impossible for us to avoid the conclusion that the creed which leads to such results is, somehow, unsuited for 'such beings as we are in such a world as ours.'"—Balfour, *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 25.

See an endeavour in this direction in Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i., pp. 616-627.

answer to all blasphemers of the species, the best consolation when our sense of its degradation is keenest, that a human brain was behind His forehead, and a human heart beating in His breast?"¹ His perfection was, of course, due to the indwelling of God. But it only affords a new evidence of the dignity of our nature, that God took it into the closest union with Himself, and that it has been proved capable of this union without the effacing of any of its essential features or the violation of its integrity. This is strengthened when we remember that the name which Jesus delighted to give to Himself was Son of man, a term which is found, always on His own lips, more than fifty times in the gospels, without reckoning parallel passages. Whatever may be the precise meaning of the term, whatever higher suggestion it may contain, it leaves no doubt that He was a man in the full sense of the word, and that He set great value on the nature and name of man.

The teaching of Jesus witnesses in many ways to the dignity of human nature. It is involved in His assertion that every man is in certain essential respects, and may become in the fullest sense, a child of God. So true is it that man is made in the likeness of God, that the most solemn demand is founded upon it,—the demand of perfection.² No higher honour has ever been conferred on our nature than that such a claim should be made upon it by a teacher so considerate as Jesus. The soul of man outweighs in value the whole world,³ and will outlast it. The very hairs of our head, which fall away unnoticed by ourselves, are numbered by God.⁴ Humanity in its insignificant,

¹ *Ecce Homo*, p. 155.

² Matt. v. 48.

³ Mark viii. 36, 37.

⁴ Matt. x. 30.

obscure, and lost members, is of great price in His eyes. "The little ones" who have "gone astray" are in the charge of angels intimate with God, and will not lightly be allowed to perish. All the resources of the simple eloquence of Jesus, which in itself is a proof of the dignity of human nature by showing the power there is in its common elements, are employed to express this truth. In how many ways it is set forth in the three beautiful parables recorded by St. Luke. Christ is dealing with classes which, on moral and social grounds, were objects of that fierce contempt of which hardly any man is capable who is not at once a Jew and a Pharisee. It is not unlikely that they were guilty of all that they were charged with. They were "lost" through their own wilful abuse of the good gifts of God. And yet Jesus speaks of them reverently as sheep, as treasure, as sons of God. Hope and effort are directed to their recovery; the shepherd goes among the mountains; the woman sweeps amid the dust and rubbish; the father is ever casting a wistful look along the path which his son took when he left home. Their restoration fills God's heart, and heaven, with a great joy. Perhaps the strongest proof of our Lord's view of the dignity of our nature is His deep regard for children, in whom we see the elements of human nature in their unspoiled simplicity. He declares them to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, types of fitness to enter it, and clothes them solemnly with His own claims.¹ Human nature has not to be fundamentally recast, but only corrected and developed, to practise the purest righteousness and enjoy the highest bliss.

The life of Christ, in this as in other respects, illustrates

¹ Mark x. 15; Matt. xviii. 5.

His teaching. He did not hold Himself aloof from men, nor show the slightest touch of repulsion from any of the bodily conditions of human life, as did the Essenes and, in a less degree, the Pharisees. Those differences among men which cause the formation of classes in human society were never suffered to limit His fellowship with them. The deep distinctions of rich and poor, instructed and ignorant, even of righteous and sinners, seemed to yield to His sense of the preciousness of the nature in which all alike shared. His methods respected human freedom ; His appeal is ever to the best principles in men ; He declines to overpower them by force, or dazzle them by miracles wrought for their own sake ; and, as we have seen, He seems to imply that men already possess in the depths of their nature the very highest truths He teaches.

All this impresses us the more when we remember how the whole course of the life of Jesus brought Him into contact with some of the most unlovely qualities of human nature, and how completely He must have suffered disillusion, if these views had arisen out of visionary moods. That one who knew men so well, and suffered so keenly at their hands, retained His reverence for them to the last, and could believe when dying that a thief and a murderer was capable of the ascent from the cross, the last degradation of the most tragic failures of the social order, to Paradise, is reassuring to all who are tempted to despair of mankind.

1. This recognition of the dignity and value of man as man has been rich in moral consequences. It is the foundation of that sense of the sacredness of human life which has been a distinguishing feature of Christian civilisation. Christianity, in this respect, has done its work so

thoroughly, it has given such strength to this sense of the sanctity of man's life, that it is easy to think that this sentiment is natural to man, and cannot be enfeebled whatever becomes of the Christian faith. But history affords full proof that "nature does not tell man that it is wrong to slay without provocation his fellow man."¹ Before Christianity, the exposition of children and the murderous pastime of the amphitheatre were not only allowed by law, but approved and recommended by moralists of repute. And even men called Christians, when dealing with native races beyond the reach of Christian law, have shown flagrant disregard of human life. It is not wise in these important questions to make too much of slight indications, but we can hardly be surprised that, among those who have raised a whole scientific structure on the observation that nature destroys ruthlessly all the inferior members of each species, the suggestion should have arisen that it might be well to treat certain cases to "euthanasia," and that the number of suicides should have increased.

2. Another consequence of the recognition of the dignity of human nature is a regard for the freedom of man, the freedom of his person and of his thought. The structure of society throughout the Roman world rested on slavery. "The gangrene of a slave-proletariat gnawed at the vitals of all the states of antiquity."² "The abyss of misery and woe which opens before our eyes in this most miserable of all proletariats we leave to be fathomed by those who venture to gaze into such depths; it is very possible that, compared with the sufferings of the Roman slaves, the sum

¹ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 18.

² Mommsen, *History of Rome*, vol. iv., p. 77.

of all negro suffering is but a drop.”¹ This slavery was regarded generally as the normal condition of things, as not simply allowed, but prescribed by the law of nature. It did not occur to philosophers, even when projecting ideal states, to forbid it, though they insisted on the duty of treating slaves humanely. But the sense of the dignity of man, even in its incipient and partial operation, limited and qualified the practice, and suggested faint doubts in regard to the very institution. In Israel no Hebrew could be a slave, because he was one of God’s ransomed servants.² The founder of Stoicism, long before the birth of Christ, laid down the doctrine that “all men are by nature equal, and that virtue alone establishes a difference between them”; and its most eloquent preacher, in the days of St. Paul, reminds masters that the dignity of man is unaffected by the accident of position, and that no good man can feel contempt for his slaves. But Stoicism was the result of historical conditions acting on a few men of a certain type; it had no wide acceptance or influence. And when we trace Stoic teaching to its roots, we find these roots grasping rocks, and not imbedded in nourishing soil. But Christ’s teaching as to the dignity of man has destroyed slavery over vast regions of the globe. That it had in it this potency was observed by that apostle who had the clearest insight into the consequences of the Master’s teaching.³ No premature applications of its principles, such as would have plunged society into chaos, were made by the Christian Church. Those principles, however, have worked with growing power towards emancipation. Their opera-

¹ Mommsen, *History of Rome*, vol. iii., p. 80.

² Lev. xxv. 39-42.

³ Gal. iii. 28.

tion has been slow, partly because the institution of slavery had been rooted so deeply in the social system. And wherever slavery lingers, the principle of the dignity of man must make war upon it. For the truth of an observation, which Homer made so long ago, is still more clear to us, that when he becomes a slave half the man is taken away. And has not the recognition of the dignity of man much still to do in removing from our industrial system some of those features which are hardly too strongly described as slavery combined with the mockery of freedom? With the lash of want held over them, men collaborate for long hours with huge machinery in some monotonous process which does not exercise or develop their higher nature, and are left at the end of the day incapable of anything but the enjoyment of coarse pleasures under strong stimulants. The diminution of the hours of labour is necessary if the average man is to have the leisure and the energy required to realise the higher possibilities of his nature.¹

3. The liberty of human thought rests on that view of the dignity of man which is derived from Jesus Christ. How little it was regarded in the best age of Greece is shown by the regulations framed by Plato, the most liberal thinker of his time, for his ideal republic. The gospels witness to the fierce intolerance which prevailed in Judæa in the time of Christ. The conditions of the Roman empire imposed a certain measure of regard for liberty of thought upon its subjects; but we need not go beyond the epistles to see the narrow limits within which it was

¹ On this and its connexion with the dignity of man as proclaimed by the Christian religion, see Marshall's *Principles of Economics*, p. 3.

restricted. This evil tradition of intolerance, consenting with some of the strongest impulses of men, kept the Church for centuries from applying in this region the fruitful principles and perfect example of Christ, who, as we have seen, was scrupulously careful not to impose on the minds of men by force or miracle any truth or law which they did not freely receive. Perhaps in no other relation has the Church been so unfaithful to the mind of the Lord. She adopted persecution "from the system of the world when she accepted the responsibility of maintaining order in the community," employing it "for political rather than religious ends."¹ Yet she has been the depositary of that spirit which in more favourable conditions has promoted liberty. And it is not without significance that it was in matters of religion that freedom was first secured. It is true that many various pleas for liberty have been advanced. Mr. Mill in his admirable essay has claimed it on the utilitarian grounds that accepted teaching is either true or false, or more generally a mixture of truth and falsehood, and that in any case it is an advantage to society to allow it to be challenged. But these reasons, like most of the reasons for human action advanced by utilitarians, which need to be energised from higher sources, would avail little except in connexion with the conviction that the reason and conscience of man are too sacred to be forced. It is thought by many that the more complete organisation of society threatens us with a tyranny more stringent and pervading than men have yet endured. However this may be, we clearly cannot afford to have enfeebled the only vital principle of liberty.

¹ "Persecution and Tolerance," Creighton's *Hulsean Lectures*, 1893-4.

4. Chastity, the virtue which preserves the purity and vigour of the very springs of life, has its root in the recognition of the dignity of man. It is a check on one of the strongest passions of our nature. This passion needs, of course, to be strong, for the continuance of the human race depends upon it; but it is probably true that its natural force is "far greater than the well-being of man requires," and that its irregular indulgence has "contributed far more than any other single cause to the misery and degradation of men."¹ Against a passion in which the senses and the affections act together, the motives which prudence supplies are singularly ineffective. Calculation seems to be excluded by the suddenness, and swept away by the violence, of its accesses. Nothing that does not work among the springs of sensibility, and act as, *e.g.*, the sense of relationship acts among the members of a family by preventing the rise of passion, will avail. The sentiment of chastity which forbids all indulgence outside, and severely regulates it within, the marriage relation is such a force. As distinguished from restraint which springs out of regard for health or public opinion or law, it is closely connected with the recognition of the sanctity of human nature. Before Christ came, it was only required in those who stood in some special relation to the holier deities. When the estimate of man had been raised by Christ, we find irregular and excessive indulgence condemned expressly as an offence against the sacredness of the human body.² And the Church at various periods has given to the law of chastity a rigour which disregarded

¹ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 282.

² 1 Cor. vi. 12-20.

the make of man's nature and the necessities of society, but which clearly proves the strong root it has in the essential principles of Christianity. Perhaps there is no fear in regard to the moral tendencies of our time so well grounded as the fear of increased laxity in sexual matters. It is not simply that the higher standard of comfort which postpones marriage, the suggestion of means by which the consequences of illicit passion may be prevented, the habit of regarding man unduly from a biological point of view, and the attention which literature and the drama are directing to such questions, tend in this direction. We have heard shameless pleas for what is called freedom put forth, and by the vague use of words like "affinity" and "selection" represented as more in harmony with the nature of things than the arrangements which are the result of the Christian discipline of society. Renan, whose respect for chastity, learned in the Catholic Church, survived an uncompromising attempt to rest both creed and conduct on science only, is obliged to confess that nature knows nothing of it. And because so much has been drawn from nature to change human opinion and improve human life, many men are disposed to look to it for authentic guidance in moral action. The union of a self-indulgent temper with naturalistic ethics threatens us with a flood of corruption, such as history shows us among other nations that had increased the materials of enjoyment and temporarily lost their faith. Everything that gives energy to the principle and sentiment of chastity is specially precious in our time. And has not chastity a great part to play in the evolution of society? May we not look to it for the final solution of that problem of

population which oppresses all scientific thinkers on social questions ?¹

5. On the dignity of human nature rests the idea of holiness. It is first of all an attribute of God, and as such is somewhat difficult to define. But there is no doubt that its chief element is moral sublimity, stainless and flawless perfection. The demand for holiness in man rests on the fact that he belongs to God, and is essentially related to Him; holiness is the outcome of the sense of affinity with God working in the human conscience. To follow out the idea would lead us far away from our immediate subject. But the saints who have been inspired by the passion for holiness have been the most powerful agents in the moral progress of mankind. And the effort after holiness is the severest discipline of the moral life, to which it applies the strongest motives and the highest standards. There is hardly any idea more foreign to the prevailing tendencies of the present time, and hardly any idea which the world can less afford to lose. Its only support is the teaching of Christ as to the divine relationship of man.

If space allowed, it would be easy to show that the moral efficacy of a recognition of the dignity of man is inexhaustible. Good manners and courtesy, the lowest forms of moral action, if they can be so described, the

¹ Mr. Spencer seems to think that the higher evolution of man will weaken the sexual instinct by drawing the vital energy to other parts of the organism (*Principles of Biology*, vol. ii., pp. 501, 502). But this will not be a merely physical process, but must take place through the action of the moral nature. Of course, if Weismann is right, there seems to be no solution of the problem of population. But is it not unwise and gratuitous to make premature applications to society of teaching which has not advanced beyond the stage of an interesting hypothesis, as Mr. Kidd does?

purest exercises of the benevolent feelings, the love of truth for its own sake, the higher manifestations of fairness and justice, as well as self-respect with its salutary operations,—all depend very largely on a recognition of the worth of human nature. No worthy idea of education can be formed, unless we regard it, not merely as a means of increasing the industrial efficiency of men, or of adding to the pleasures of life, but as an instrument of awakening the dormant possibilities of the human soul.

We only add that the teaching of Christ in this matter is in harmony with the best tendencies of our time. Science, after all, witnesses in its own way to the dignity of man. He is the consummation and crown of the long and painful process of evolution, and no higher product is to be expected; no physical processes cast a ray of light on the mystery of his consciousness; his very triumphs over nature attest his superiority to it. And that teaching alone justifies the impatience with which whatever degrades or injures a single human being is coming to be regarded. When one who has learned of Christ is pointed, by those who pride themselves on seeing things as they are, to man as he so often appears, ignorant, vicious, and brutal, he is inclined to answer in the noble words of William Blake: "I question not my corporeal eye, any more than I would question a window. I see not with it, but through it." And the Christian estimate is largely verified by the response which is generally found when an appeal is steadily made to the better side of human nature.

III

To love all men, or, rather, to love man as man, is another factor of the morality derived from Jesus Christ. It is closely connected with what has gone before ; for it is a state of the emotions corresponding to that estimate of man with which we have been dealing. It is hard to define, as all our simpler feelings are. But it is that feeling which gives us interest in men, which causes concern about their welfare, sorrow for what grieves and injures them, delight in all that promotes their good or increases their happiness. This affection may be raised to a passion, and not simply to one passion struggling with others, but to the sovereign passion of the soul. It does not lead us to treat all men alike, or show an easy indulgence to wrongdoing ; indeed, it excludes these weaknesses, and often puts on the form of a salutary severity, as we see in the typical instance of a father's love.

There is special need in the present day for some such emotion. For, owing to the increased circulation of the population, the wider business relations, the facilities of travel, men are brought into contact with large numbers of their fellow men, with whom they have no bonds of family or neighbourhood or race. Patriotism, especially in this country, where it has not been kept alive by any common danger, seems to be declining ; and it is said that the family bond is loosening ! The subtle ties of a common interest are not perceived, and, indeed, are impalpable to all who do not look through the eyes of love. For on the surface the interests of men appear to clash ; competition has been regarded as the instrument of progress ; the

struggle for existence, or at least for the means of enjoyment, has been described in scientific treatises as though it were a sort of providence. And, deride philosophy as we will, there is an important difference between feelings which have not and feelings which are supposed to have a theoretic basis. All this has undoubtedly tended to harden the feelings of men, to dry up the springs of love. On the other hand, it must be said—and it is a further proof of the confusions of our time—that no age has ever resisted more nobly or more successfully a temptation involved in its conditions. For the love of man as man, stripped of all the relations which of themselves produce love, has developed a greater intensity and has been more widely diffused during the last half-century than ever before.

Many causes have tended to bring this about. Prolonged peace in the case of our own country, milder conditions of life, more humane laws, softer manners, have acted steadily in the development of those benevolent feelings of which they are in part an effect. And these feelings have been exercised and strengthened by a fuller exposure of the need and sorrow of men, through an ever more widely circulating press. Until recently men only knew the woes of their own little circle; now the woes of the wide world are forced upon their notice. But those who most deeply consider the causes of this increase of benevolence, in spite of the fact that there has been so much to discourage it, will assign the first place among them to the revival of Christianity which has undoubtedly taken place,¹ and not of dogmatic Christianity mainly, but

¹ The following words of Mr. Frederic Harrison, in spite of their hesitation, are a striking acknowledgment of this: "The net result of the whole

of Christianity as set forth in the teaching, and illustrated in the life and death, of Jesus Christ.

For Jesus Christ is the source of love for man as man. The leading virtue of antiquity, which inspired its noblest deeds—patriotism—involved “a heartfelt hatred of the foreign nature.” The principle of Judaism was, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” Stoicism, though it affected to regard all men as brothers, made the extinction of pity and compassion an end of its discipline. Jesus proclaimed the law of love in its greatest energy and its utmost extension. He adopted from the Old Testament the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” and stretched the word neighbour till it joined men of hostile races, who were brought together merely by the chances of travel and misfortune.¹ It may be thought that in this case helplessness and suffering constituted a natural claim on love, though the story shows how little this was regarded by the majority of men. Jesus, however, extends the law of love until it embraces enemies whose malice is active and efficacious. Even when hatred flashes in the eye, and the curse is on the lips, and the arm is stretched to smite, the return must be love, roused by the hatred into special activity, going out to God in prayer and to the enemy in blessing.² It is impossible to give to the law of love a more absolute form.

It has been said that an emotion such as love is not a fit subject for command: that the verb to love has no imperative mood; that if a man is lovable we shall love him, and if he is not, we cannot love him, whoever bids us. The

negative attack on the gospel has, perhaps, been to deepen the moral hold of Christianity on society.”—“The Future of Agnosticism” (*Fortnightly Review*, January, 1889).

¹ Luke x. 25-37.

² Matt. v. 43-48; Luke vi. 27-38.

writer, who has stated the objection very properly, says that, even if this be true, the command is not useless. "The opposite passion of selfishness was at this period justified by authority, and claimed to be on the side of reason and law. Precept is fairly matched against precept."¹ He also adds that love is natural, and would be felt for all were it not for more or less artificial hindrances,—ungrounded suspicions, selfish theories, perverse presumptions of the intellect,—and that we may be required to put away these obstacles. But it is as difficult to get rid of these things, because we are commanded to do it, as it is to love. In fact, it is more true to say that love is required to cast them out, than that they must be cast out to allow of the activity of love.

You must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The command, at any rate, makes us feel that the want of love is an evil condition of mind, to lament it, to feel ashamed of it. It becomes associated with moral pain, and that process by which the mind endeavours to get rid of what is painful is set up.

When we say that love cannot be commanded, are we not thinking of a command, detached from all living influences, written in the pages of a text-book by some teacher who has no moral energy to impart? The command to love has an altogether different power as it falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. There is all the difference in the world between an exhortation to courage addressed to men by some philosopher from his quiet chamber, and the same exhortation borne on the hot breath from the

¹ *Ecce Homo*, p. 147.

glowing lips of a leader just before the battle joins. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, His example, His power over human hearts, combine to make it perfectly reasonable in Him to command men to love one another.

One great motive to the love of man which our Lord urges is drawn from the example of God. He tells us that the perfection of God consists in love.¹ God is the Father of all men, and love is the distinguishing attribute of a Father. Not a single man is beyond His love; for on all His sun shines and His rain falls. Even the sinful are the objects of His care; He has sent His Son to seek and save them. He not only receives the prodigal who returns to His house, but runs to welcome him with kisses and gifts. He gives good things to them that ask, and numbers the very hairs on the head of those who trust Him. Christ's revelation of God was summed up by the disciple who lay upon His bosom in the words, "God is love."

This new revelation of God is the necessary basis of the command to love all men. The character of God is the ideal of moral perfection, the ground of the moral law. That love was supreme in God saved it from two misconstructions. Men had persuaded themselves that to put aside hatred and resentment and revenge, and to forgive the offender, was weak and despicable. This could not be if the Almighty was loving and forgiving. It had been supposed that to feel tenderly towards the sinner showed a culpable laxity of the moral sense. It was not possible to maintain this if He who is infinitely holy loves the sinful. It is through Jesus Christ that we draw from the heart of God the rule unknown outside Christianity,—to love the

¹ Matt. v. 48.

sinner while we hate the sin. Not to love one whom God loves is clearly to be out of harmony with God ; it is sin. The common Fatherhood makes all men brothers, and to brothers we owe love. These considerations placed men in a different attitude to one another, removed from the intellect those prejudices, and from the heart those prepossessions, which hinder and stifle affection, and gave to love a high place in the ideal of human character.

The example of Christ Himself gives force to His precept and tends to make it practicable. Love for men is the conspicuous feature of His life. It is seen in the lighter form of sociability. He was no recluse ; He loved to be where men gather,—in the synagogue, the temple, and the crowd. He was accessible to all by day and by night.¹ He ate and drank, and so joined in a sacrament of friendship, with publicans and sinners as well as with Pharisees. It is seen in the graver form of compassion for the needy,—the hungry, the unhappy, the sick, and the sinful. No loveless words, no harsh sentences passed His lips. Even condemnation, which is quite compatible with love, was not congenial to Him,² and was only pronounced during His earthly life on the unloving Pharisees. He felt the yearnings and shed the tears of love over the city which was about to consummate a long course of evil deeds by killing Him ; and His last breath was spent in prayer that those who had mocked and buffeted and crucified Him might be forgiven. We feel that His law of love is not a mere imperative, but has within it the power of

¹ On the accessibility of Christ, see a striking passage in Fairbairn's *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 371.

² John iii. 17.

His life. And it received the most tender and sacred of all sanctions when He shed His blood for the remission of sins.

But it is not by precept and example merely that Jesus works. Indeed, they only give direction to a force which He creates in human hearts. That force is a deep, responsive love which arises in all who receive His revelation of God. To appreciate this we need only consider how love rises and spreads in human life. It seems to be a law of things that love can only come from love, as life can only come from life. It has been suggested¹ that the love which a man feels for his children is the love which he received from his parents; he absorbed it in childhood and gives it out in manhood. That this is something more than a pleasant fancy, is proved by the fact that one who has passed his early years in a home where pure love reigns, develops a sweetness and tenderness for which we look in vain to one whose childhood has known no smiles and no caresses. The former carries into life a fund, a spring of love on which all may draw. The same law is seen in single deeds. When a great act of kindness has awakened gratitude in any heart, the gratitude is a source of similar deeds of kindness to others. We should regard as inhuman a man to whom a signal service has been rendered, who would not, if he could, render a like service to another. That this law operates in the higher sphere is recognised by our Lord Himself:² "Even as the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. . . . This is My commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." The fountain of love is the heart of the Father; this love poured into the heart of the Son is the source and measure of

¹ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

² John xv. 9, 12.

His love for men ; His love poured into the hearts of His disciples is the source and measure of their love for one another. Jesus Christ brings the love of God into the souls of men, pitying, pardoning, saving. It stirs a deep, responsive love, and this love spreads over the whole circle of life. "We love, because He first loved us."¹

Of this law there are many applications in the teaching of Christ. He has brought into vital union the two commandments found apart in the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love we owe and feel to God is to be shown to His visible image, man.² The parable of the unforgiving servant is another application. To have received the forgiveness of so deep a debt as we owe to God may be expected, on the ordinary principles of human nature, to lead us to forgive the slight debt which others owe to us; not to do it is unnatural and inhuman. Indeed, the Lord's Prayer implies that a man cannot receive the forgiveness of God unless a state of mind is produced which leads him to forgive others.

The love which Jesus Himself creates in the hearts of His disciples gives to His command and example a vital energy. Those who love Him cannot but love those whom He loves, because He loves them; for, to them, His love communicates to all its objects a charm, and confers on them a claim. And this is strengthened by the fact that He expressly identifies with Himself, and invests

¹ 1 John iv. 19. The A.V. reads, "We love *Him*"; but there is no limitation in the true reading. See Revised Version.

² 1 John iv. 20.

with His own claims, those who most need love and are perhaps least likely to get it.¹

As a matter of historical fact, it is amongst those who have loved Jesus Christ that the deepest and purest love for men has been found. And the love of Christ is still the only spring of love for man as such. We must see something beside the man himself, if we are to love him. For only a few men have claims upon us which nature has ever recognised. Men, as we know them, have mingled qualities, and the qualities which cause us pain impress us more than those which give us pleasure. Men have interests which clash with ours; they stand in our way; they are often unfair and unkind. What can make us love them? Nothing but the reflection, so habitual that it rises up of its own accord, that God feels toward each one a deep, paternal love; that if He can love them there is nothing to prevent our love; that the best response to His love is to love them; that Jesus Christ, who has shown to us a love stronger than death, identifies Himself with them, and bids us love them as He has loved us, and deal with them as we should deal with Him.

It has been said that "the direct love of Christ, as it was felt by His first followers, is a rare thing among modern Christians";² and we have been counselled, with some hesitation, it is true, as we would avoid what is "artificial and unnatural," not "to labour to produce it in ourselves."³ We believe the statement to be false in fact, and the recommendation to be false in principle. It would hardly be too much to say that there are millions of men

¹ Matt. xxv. 31-46.

² *Ecce Homo*, p. 160.

³ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 220.

in the world to-day who feel a "conscious, ardent sensation of personal love to Him." If all who feel it would only declare it, the world would find itself in presence of a moral force of incomparable efficacy. And there is no way to love all men so natural as to cultivate the love of the perfect Man, in whom love was the master passion, and then to love others at His bidding, because He loves them. Happily we need not "labour" to produce love to Him; He is one whom to know is to love.

The surpassing power of the Christian motive is seen, if we compare it with the motives which mere moralists can supply. One of the most beautiful pages in ethical literature is to be found in Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*. He is dealing with anger, which the collision of passions and interests so easily kindles in human hearts, and which so often cools into settled hatred. In addition to some Christian motives, which he presents in their most utilitarian form, he suggests as "sedatives of anger" the following reflections: "The possibility of mistaking the motives from which the conduct that offended us proceeded; how often *our* offences have been the effect of inadvertency, when they were construed into indications of malice; the inducement which prompted our adversary to act as he did, and how powerfully the same inducement has, at one time or other, operated upon ourselves; that he is suffering perhaps under a contrition which he is ashamed or wants opportunity to confess; and how ungenerous it is to triumph by coldness or insult over a spirit already humbled in secret; that the returns of kindness are sweet, and that there is neither honour, nor virtue, nor use, in resisting them. . . . Add to this, the

indecenty of extravagant anger; how it renders us, while it lasts, the scorn and sport of all about us, of which it leaves us, when it ceases, sensible and ashamed; the inconveniences and irretrievable misconduct into which our irascibility has sometimes betrayed us; the friendships it has lost us; the distresses and embarrassments in which we have been involved by it; and the sore repentance which, on one account or other, it always cost us.”¹ Add to this what physiological psychologists tell us as to the disturbing effect of anger on the bodily organs, and all that moralists can say as to its disorganising effect on society, and then compare the accumulated motives in reach and power with the following passage from St. Paul: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell.”²

It is unnecessary to pursue this principle into its moral consequences, as we did in the previous case, and indeed it is impossible. For it covers well-nigh the whole ethical field. It not only excludes all those sentiments which cause division and conflict and bitterness among men, but it prompts to every form of duty involved in their relations to each other. This is taught by our Lord, when He declares the love of man to be one of the

¹ Paley, *Moral and Political Philosophy*, book iii., chap. vii. We have only quoted part of the passage.

² Eph. iv. 31 to v. 2.

two principles on which the law and the prophets hang, and by St. Paul when he says that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

IV

We proceed to consider the third element of the Christian life as it is directed towards men,—self-denying service. It is the practical expression of that estimate of human nature, and of that love for men, of which we have been speaking. It is the spirit of Christ in action.

As almost all moral evil may be summed up in selfishness, so nearly all moral excellence is comprised in the sacrifice of personal feelings and interests for the good of others. In the family, in the community, in the world itself, soundness is found in proportion to the degree in which it prevails. How does the present age stand in regard to it? We shall expect to find the same conflicting tendencies which we have observed in respect to the thoughts and feelings at its root. On the one hand, it is more talked about than ever, the word "altruism" has come into common use, and plans are freely proposed which involve it in a high degree; on the other hand, the grounds of it are being eaten away. The age reminds us of a man who greatly values health, who is embarked in schemes which require it to be vigorous, but in whom secret diseases are slowly sapping it.

In the first place, everything that lowers our estimate of man, or that makes his life appear short and petty, as much of the teaching of the present day tends to do, diminishes the force of the motive to make sacrifices for his sake. After describing the moral paralysis that creeps over us

when we realise our own insignificance in the universe, Sir John R. Seeley says: "For a while we comfort ourselves with the notion of self-sacrifice; we say, what matter if I pass, let me think of others! But the *other* has become contemptible no less than the self; all human griefs alike seem little worth assuaging; human happiness, too paltry at the best to be worth increasing. . . . The affections die away in a world where everything great and enduring is cold; they die of their own conscious feebleness and bootlessness." ¹ Again, the doctrine of the survival of the fittest supplies a strong theoretic basis for selfishness. To require others to render to a man more than he can force from them in the struggle for existence has some appearance of a human artifice to defeat the aim of nature. "That they should get who have the power, and they should keep who can," appears to be a rule as "old" and "good" as the world. When Professor Huxley represents the element of self-sacrifice in morality as the reversal of the cosmic process, some suspicion of the soundness of such sacrifices cannot but arise, and such suspicions make it easier to be selfish. We do not forget that teachers of human evolution, long before Professor Drummond, pointed out the altruistic elements which it involves; but no one will maintain that these have caught the attention of men in the same degree as the stern principle of the struggle for existence. And these altruistic sentiments, with the aureole that surrounds them, are represented as little better than a cunning apparatus along with others, "many of them mean and many of them disgusting," to insure the survival of the species. On this view it is difficult to resist the belief

¹ *Natural Religion*, pp. 261, 262.

that the present age, in which these motives are beginning to be "seen through," and this ancient glory to vanish, marks a fateful stage in moral development. In important sections of life, during the last half-century, we have seen the principle of competition in almost unchecked operation. It has been regarded as not only a necessary, but even a beneficent principle, as the most potent cause of progress. We have been told that the welfare of society may be left to take care of itself, while each man is looking after his own interests. The only caution he requires is to be sure he judges correctly what his interests are. And so society, which ought to be a great household, has, at any rate in the sphere of business, which is an important training ground of character, been converted into a vast arena, in which for the most part the victors are untroubled and the vanquished unpitied.

The tendency of the doctrine and the practice to which we have referred is strengthened by the vast increase of material comforts. Pleasures of which our fathers never dreamed have been brought within our reach. A multitude of artificial desires has been created. Their satisfaction is sought not only as a means of gratification, but as an evidence of efficiency and success. This has tended to make the struggle between men more fierce. And more luxurious living in those circles which give the moral tone has created a softness of character, which, while not unfavourable to vague, sentimental benevolence, is by no means favourable to self-denial.

But in a single generation one of the great lessons of history has been taught. All this has wrought so much evil, it has secreted so much discontent and bitterness in

society, that a great reaction has set in. Competition, the struggle for existence or for the means of enjoyment, is denounced as anti-social and inhuman, wealth and luxury as crimes. Supposing that they are, how are they to be expelled from society? Many lovers of their fellow men are dreaming of new forms of social organisation, in which rigorous statutes will hold selfishness in check, and men will receive what they need, rather than what they can win in conflict with their fellow men. But most sober thinkers find it difficult to believe that any social changes can do much to repress the working of a passion so deep and strong as selfishness, and, indeed, such thinkers cannot see how men can be got to make the most of themselves, if the spring of self-interest is enfeebled, and no other spring implanted.

What is clearly needed, then, whether with new forms of social organisation or without them, is a principle which will work as powerfully and as steadily as selfishness, in the opposite direction, which will lead men to seek the good of their fellow men as earnestly as they seek their own. But where is such a principle to be found? By what doctrines shall it be nourished, by what motives urged, by what sanctions supported? Again we turn to Jesus Christ.

It is a commonplace to say that His life is the most impressive example of self-sacrifice ever presented to the world. All that men in general regard as worth living for,—worldly goods, ease, comfort, and the joys of home,—He renounced, to devote Himself to duty and to the higher interests of men. He lived a most laborious life, and had not where to lay His head. He had the most tender sympathy with suffering, yet did not shrink from the sight of it, and even lived amongst it. He had the keenest sense of

sin,—a lustful look was to Him what adultery was to other men,—yet He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. With a heart yearning for love, He braved scorn and hatred and malice. Unflinching He trod the path of duty, gazing into the face of the cruel death which closed it. And when its horrible features grew more definite, He did not recoil, but went to meet it. Here it is of the utmost importance to grasp firmly the real humanity of our Lord, or the force of His example is blunted. He had the heart and the nerves of a man, and this death, with all its terrible circumstances, struck Him with fear. It came in the very fulness of His life and energy. As He went from Galilee to meet it, the spring was painting the country with delight. When He left the supper-room for Gethsemane, Jerusalem was full of the joy and song of the festival. Nothing that could aggravate His suffering was wanting,—desertion, betrayal, mockery, cruelty. The mysterious relation in which it stood to human sin added tenfold to its horror. We can hear the “prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death.”¹ “Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.”² Yet He endured it all that He might save men.

And so the principle of sacrifice is carried into the very life of God. The Son of God felt every pang of the human nature He had assumed. The suffering of His well-beloved Son was suffering to the eternal Father.

In connexion with this example, so august and so

¹ Heb. v. 7.

² Luke xxii. 44. Whether this verse belongs to the true text or not, it expresses what is found in passages undoubtedly genuine.

pathetic, Jesus imposes on all His disciples the law of sacrifice for the good of others. The formula with which He calls them is, "Follow Me." They were required to take up the cross, in certain cases to strip themselves of all that they possessed, and give up life itself. Eminence among them is to be attained by humble service in lowly places. And the Lord took care to keep this law ever before them when He had gone. For we cannot fail to see the significance of the only rite which Jesus instituted for repeated use by His disciples,—the Lord's Supper. In it the touching symbols of His sacrifice—broken bread and wine poured out—are presented to the eye. All who partake are reminded that the Lord has given Himself for them; they are joined to one another in the closest and holiest of all communions. Both the example of their Lord, and the relation with other men into which they have been brought, impose on them the obligation of sacrifice. This simple rite has suffered strange distortions, yet this element has never been lost sight of. There has always been associated with it an act of self-denial—an offering of what had cost toil and would have purchased pleasure—for the relief of the poor. Its value in keeping alive the idea of self-sacrifice among rude men in turbulent times cannot be exaggerated, and every thoughtful man will count the more frequent celebration of it in our own day as one of the causes of the marked increase of unselfish activity which we have seen. The strongest roots often end in fine filaments which escape the common eye.

Self-sacrifice, the great law of social health, has, then, been insisted on by Jesus Christ in proportion to its importance. Matthew Arnold, referring to the words,

"Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me," says, "Perhaps there is no other maxim of Jesus which has such a combined stress of evidence for it, and may be taken as so eminently His."¹ What he calls "the secret of Jesus" is that this self-renunciation does not leave the life bare and the heart with an aching sense of loss, but insures a plenitude of peace and joy.² This our Lord everywhere affirms, not in order to stimulate by reward a disposition which no reward can affect, but for the comfort of the men He loves. But does not Mr. Arnold seriously misunderstand the self-renunciation that Jesus demands? He is evidently thinking of the sacrifice of the lower to the higher self. Now, if by the "higher self" is chiefly meant the sympathies that go out to others, this way of stating the case may be allowed to pass. But apparently Mr. Arnold had in view mere self-culture, such as seems to have been the religion of Goethe, whom he so much admired. It is not to self-denial in the interest of self-culture that Jesus calls men with the promise of peace and joy. Indeed, there is hardly a surer path away from these simple blessings than mere self-culture. It is the forgetfulness of self, the sinking of self in the service of their fellow men, that our Lord requires from His disciples. There is little said about self-culture in the gospels; it is regarded as incidental to a self-forgetful pursuit of the good of others. It would hardly be worth while to refer to this misunderstanding if it had been confined to Mr. Arnold, but it has been only

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 128.

² This springs largely from the fact that the self-renunciation and the peace and joy have a common root in love.

too common. Self-denial is so clearly a law of Christ that Christians cannot lose sight of it. Yet self-denial has too often taken the form of a mere self-discipline, the subjugation of the lower nature by the higher. This self-discipline is, of course, necessary, but the service of man will abundantly supply it; and if the former were treated as subordinate to the latter, it would be preserved from the morbid strain so often traceable in it. What Jesus demands is not the philosophic virtue of casting away a lower for a higher good; it is the moral virtue of losing self in the service of others.

The Crucified, who left the law and the example of sacrifice, and also raised immeasurably the general estimate of the worth of human nature, saved the Roman world. Again and again through the ages a clearer view of Him has imparted fresh vigour to society. And when fears, not altogether groundless, for the social order trouble the heart, it is consoling to remember that the present generation has seen Him more clearly than any generation since the days of His apostles. In more lives every day He is rebuking selfishness, inspiring love, prompting deeds of costly service. When men ask why they should deny themselves for the sake of others, and fail to find in any system of philosophy a valid answer, a glance at Him puts the question to flight, and strikes with shame the heart to which it has occurred.

V

This spirit which Jesus Christ introduced into human life is embodied in a formula, a conception, and an institution. The formula is the golden rule, the conception is the brotherhood of man, the institution is the Christian Church.

1. We need not enquire how far the golden rule had been anticipated by previous moral teachers. It is not the habit of the present age to think less of a teacher because the truth to which he gives perfect expression has been floating vaguely before other minds. It is generally recognised that credit attaches, not to the man who may throw out a truth, unconnected and unsupported, and who does not succeed in commending it to general acceptance, but to him who fastens it on the hearts of men, and brings it into common use. The golden rule before Christ had been like an inscription on a medal, the choice treasure of some museum. Christ stamped it on the current coin, and sent it into general circulation. He also works those changes in human dispositions, as a result of which it ceases to be merely a mocking ideal, and becomes a practicable rule. Of course, as a formula in which, as in the teaching of Jesus generally, "the clearest meaning in the briefest compass"¹ is sought, it is liable to misconstruction. But when read in connexion with the precepts of which it is a summary, and in the light of the deeds of which it is a brief abstract, it cannot mislead. Such an objection as that urged against it by Professor Huxley is singularly misdirected. He seemed to suppose that it exalts a blind and inconsiderate sympathy into a rule of life; that it means, *e.g.*, dealing with a thief as the thief himself would desire to be dealt with.² It is surely placing Jesus Christ very low on the roll of the world's teachers to suppose He could have meant this. The

¹ Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i., p. 130.

² Huxley's "Prolegomena to Romanes Lecture," *Collected Essays*, vol. ix., pp. 31, 32.

golden rule was addressed to men who had accepted Christ's authority, who sought to do the will of God, in whom self-love had been purged by filial submission and unselfish service; who had learned from their Master not to be afraid of suffering, but to regard it as disciplinary because it stimulates and purifies. It says to such men when they have been injured: "Put yourselves in the offender's place; weigh every mitigating circumstance as you do in your own case, and then inflict what you think the law of God and the welfare of society requires, and nothing more." And, generally, it bids them cultivate a respect and love for others as strong as self-regard. Such men under such influences are an ideal tribunal. Among the thoughts which have acted as forces in human history, the golden rule probably deserves the highest place. If we could realise, however faintly, the evil which it has prevented and the good which it has prompted, we should feel how deep a debt we owe to Him who inscribed it, with His own blood, among the moral precepts of mankind.

2. The brotherhood of man is an idea which has little meaning or value outside the teaching of Jesus Christ. True, it was a conception round which the thoughts of wise and good men had been playing before His time. In the days when the Roman empire had brought together men who had no bonds of blood or nationality or religion to unite them, the most serious thinkers of the time, the Stoics, had suggested the natural bond of brotherhood. They very properly based it on the common relationship of all men to God, as it is expressed in the hymn of Cleanthes, "We are Thy offspring." For brotherhood is not a direct relation; two men are brothers simply because they stand

in a like relation to a third person, the common father. The ground of brotherhood is the father's nature; the ties of brotherhood are the father's heart-strings. But there was no warmth in the Stoic doctrine; it meant little more than the other phrase they used, common citizenship of the world. For the Stoics were pantheists; God with them was scarcely distinguishable from the world; He was as much the slave of necessity as man; Providence was only the principle of order and development in the world.¹ As far as brotherhood means derivation from the same source or partaking in a common nature, the Stoics were warranted in affirming it. But the value of the idea of brotherhood is not that it suggests a physical relation, but that it awakens regard and love, and all the obligations which they create and recognise. The Stoic doctrine of brotherhood could not accomplish this, because in it the common father had no loving interest in his children; and therefore it never grasped the hearts of men, and served little purpose except in softening somewhat the rigour of Roman law and preparing the minds of men for Christianity. It is this all-important element of respect as for an equal, and love as for a natural brother, that this conception carries within it in the teaching of Jesus. All men are the children of the same Father, who is a father indeed, valuing and loving each of His children. It is this divine regard and love of which we show ourselves unworthy when we despise or hate or withhold love from those who share it with us, and who ought therefore to be sacred in our eyes. It may not be amiss to remind some of those who talk so much of brotherhood, and expect to work

¹ Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, pp. 149-152.

wonders by its realisation, that, cut off from Jesus Christ, their idea of brotherhood has no more vitality in it than that of the Stoics. It means only that far back along each line of descent we come to the same source of life in the blind, unfeeling forces of the world, and that men are like each other in the broad features of their nature. But out of brotherhood in this metaphysical sense no power will ever be got for moral purposes. Such a brotherhood is a body in which there is no beating heart or circulating blood.

3. To give to this spirit a form, an organisation, in which it might be treasured, exercised, and presented impressively to the world, Jesus Christ established His Church. It is the only institution the world has seen of which the conditions of membership are purely moral and spiritual; to which men and women and children, regardless of the deep distinctions of nationality or condition, the rich and the poor, the cultured and the illiterate, the free and the slave, are alike admitted. It requires from them only loyalty to Jesus Christ. Its confession is His divine Sonship and mission; it assembles in His name; His presence is in it; and His words are its laws. Its liturgy is the prayer which recognises in its first two words the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men; its only authentic ritual is the sacrament which symbolises incorporation in Christ, and the sacrament which afresh presents to the heart His love and sacrifice. Its members are brothers; they are to provoke one another to love and good works; and one who persistently offends another has no true place in it.¹ Amongst its members humility is exaltation, and service eminence. Its mission is to bring all men into the brotherhood. Its ideal is

¹ Matt. xviii. 15-18.

to be the body of the Lord, expressing His dispositions and purposes, as the body expresses the dispositions and purposes of the mind. The saddest thing in the history of man is the corruption of the Church. But this corruption has never worked so deeply as might be supposed from reading ecclesiastical history. History for the most part deals with the government of the Church, into which pride and ambition have so largely entered, and knows nothing of those wide circles of ordinary life in which the true fruit of the spirit of Christ has been displayed by gentle hearts in unselfish deeds. In its worst days the gospels have been read, and the death of Christ celebrated, in the services of the Church. Its most popular manual of devotion has been the *Imitatio Christi*. The noblest men have been its most faithful sons. And, while admitting many qualifications, there can be no doubt that its influence has been against slavery and oppression and cruelty; that its efforts have been for the spread of knowledge, the relief of poverty, the healing of sickness. And to-day the Christian Church is the most powerful engine of philanthropy; it is the only institution which even professes to take love as its spirit, and service as its law. They are the real enemies of the human race whose efforts are directed to disparage and destroy the Church; they are the true friends of their fellow men who seek to restore and purify and raise it nearer to its great ideal. Let us hope that the Church, which even in its slumber has an ear for the voice of its Lord, will recognise His call in the events of our time, and with a clearer view of His form and a better knowledge of His life than it has had for many centuries, will surprise the world by the treasures of love and devotion stored up within it.

VI

It has been said that Jesus Christ created a new type of man. Confining our view simply to the relations between man and man, this language is not too strong. St. Paul is the brightest illustration of it. It was the spirit of Christ which changed him from a persecutor, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," to one who, as we have seen, was so careful of the conscience and feelings of the weak and narrow; who, among the Thessalonians, was "gentle as when a nurse cherisheth her own children";¹ who could wish that he were "anathema from Christ," in his view the most complete perdition, for the sake of those who were his bitterest enemies. And his epistles show that a similar change had been wrought in other men: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."² The change consisted largely in that they knew no man after the flesh, but had formed quite a new estimate of man, and that "they no longer live unto themselves," but unto Christ. To appreciate this strong language we have to throw ourselves back to those times, when, "in the last decrepitude of ethnic morality, the selfishness of human intercourse was much greater than the present age can easily understand."³ The spirit of Christ, working indirectly through literature, and ethical treatises, and codes of law, and schools, and public institutions, and the common atmosphere of social life, has greatly raised the moral level of the average man; but the Church still expresses the great change which the

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 7.

² 2 Cor. v. 17; comp. Col. iii. 5-17.

³ *Ecce Homo*, p. 150.

direct influence of Christ produces in the character of those who yield to Him the obedience of faith under the strong terms of conversion, regeneration, and sanctification.

Objections have often been urged against Christian morality, even as taught by Christ. It has been said that it is an ideal which it is utterly beyond the power of men to realise. But it is not an ideal merely, hanging in the air, so to speak; it belongs, as we have seen, to a living system, which in one part generates the force that it requires in another. It is in organic connexion with a perfect example, Jesus Christ Himself; with a mighty inspiration, the love of God; with an efficient cause, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and with an adequate motive, eternal life. Men have been known, notably St. Paul, whose lives have almost perfectly illustrated it. And its mere presence in the world has raised the general life, as the calm moon in the heavens lifts the waters of every sea on which it looks.

On the other hand, it has been charged with inadequacy. Mr. Mill says: "I believe that the sayings of Christ are all that I can see any evidence of their having been intended to be; that they are irreconcilable with nothing which a comprehensive morality requires; that everything which is excellent in ethics may be brought within them, with no greater violence to their language than has been done to it by all who have attempted to deduce from them any practical system of conduct whatever. But it is quite consistent with this to believe that they contain, and were meant to contain, only a part of the truth; that many essential elements of the highest morality are among the things which are not provided for, nor intended to be provided for, in the recorded deliverances of

the Founder of Christianity, and which have been entirely thrown aside in the system of ethics erected on the basis of those deliverances by the Christian Church. And this being so, I think it a great error to persist in attempting to find in the Christian doctrine that complete rule for our guidance which its Author intended it to sanction and enforce, but only partially to provide.”¹ A brief examination of this passage will place the matter in what appears to us the true light. That the “recorded deliverances” of Christ cannot contain “a complete rule for our guidance” is quite clear. They were addressed to men in altogether different conditions, for the most part to His disciples, who, while they were following Him, were detached from all the ordinary and settled relations and duties of life. A “system of conduct” which would cover life to-day would have been out of place and unintelligible to them. And one who legislates for all time must avoid details; for a rule which would guide men rightly in one generation may become a snare in another. Especially may we expect such details to have been avoided by our Lord, who had so great a horror of mechanical conformity to the letter of a precept,—the method of the Pharisee. It is so much easier for men to follow prescriptions than to apply principles, that a complete “system of conduct” which would have been of any use to His first disciples, given by His authority, would probably have stifled the conscience and arrested the moral progress of mankind. But have we, in the words of Christ, principles which will apply to all the conditions of human life? If by principles are meant generalisations, from which by rigorous deduction every detail of conduct may be

¹ *On Liberty*, p. 29.

drawn, even this, perhaps, can hardly be affirmed. Jesus Christ supplies, not moral rules, nor even moral principles, but moral forces. Men are too selfish to follow the most exact rules, too careless and indolent to apply the most comprehensive principles. Something is necessary to impart to them seriousness and passion, to check pride and selfishness, to raise to their full power and stretch to their widest operation the best sympathies of their nature. This is the priceless service in the sphere of morals which Jesus Christ has rendered to mankind. Having bound His disciples to Himself by the strongest and tenderest ties, He has laid upon them the obligation to respect and love and serve their fellow men for His sake. He has made it impossible that they should do otherwise as long as they are faithful to Him. And this not by "sayings" or "recorded deliverances" merely, but by the vital influences of His person and example. Where such sentiments and obligations are felt and recognised, where men are deeply concerned, not only not to hurt, but to help as far as possible, their fellow men, they will make the best use of their minds, of the fullest knowledge and the soundest science, to provide methods and rules corresponding to the changing conditions of each age. A law-making power has been implanted in society, and, in some measure, in each individual breast.

It seems to be the intention of our Lord that from this law-making power in each society and in each individual the details of duty should proceed. And may we not say that there is no greater need than that Christian teachers should study carefully the conditions of the present time, and apply to them fearlessly the spirit of

Christ, in order to help Christian men to determine the practical rules of Christian action? This is the more necessary as the changes of society have been more rapid and bewildering in our own day than any single generation has witnessed before. It is not too much to say that some of the best men living are at a temporary loss what to do, and that sentiments and energies which would go far to solve the problems which press upon us are often distracted, misapplied, and wasted.

CHAPTER III

JESUS CHRIST AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS—THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION—CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

THE limits of this lecture will allow only the briefest treatment of the other branches of our subject. It is not possible, however, to conclude without offering a few suggestions, which we hope hereafter to have the opportunity to develop.

I

One of the leading characteristics of the present age is the social ferment which is taking place. Its causes have already been briefly sketched.¹ The masses of the people have become more than ever discontented with their lot. The very alleviations of their condition during the last half-century, according to a law which De Tocqueville pointed out, have deepened that discontent. Science has discovered new forces, and subdued them to the service of man; it has laid bare and removed many causes of suffering; it has opened up new sources of pleasure. The fairest, most delightful forms which human life has yet assumed are constantly before the general eye. The sense of political equality has made men impatient of wide differences in social conditions. The study of history, as well

¹ Pages 3, 4.

as observation of the changes which are so rapidly going on beneath our eyes, have taught us that the arrangements of society are not as fixed and unalterable as they were supposed to be, and have suggested that they may be easily and beneficially changed at the will of the governing power. The development of the representative system has placed this power in the hands of the masses of the people. Organised co-operation has accomplished great things in every sphere of life, and there seems to be no limit to its possible achievements. Glowing pictures of what science and organisation may do have stimulated the popular imagination, and awakened all the covetous hopes of the human heart.

At the same time, the moral sentiments have been enlisted in the same cause. Impassioned indictments of the industrial and social economy have been drawn up. It has been represented as organised robbery of the labouring classes, a cunning contrivance to limit the masses to the bare means of subsistence. The cruel and inequitable incidents of competition have been isolated and exaggerated. Even the most dispassionate is obliged to confess that there is much in our social arrangements which cannot be reconciled with the elementary principles of justice. The influence of outward conditions on the moral life is more fully realised,—the stifling of high thoughts and generous feelings by sordid cares and ignoble occupations, the brutalising effects of excessive toil, the immorality and indecency to which the very poor are often condemned by their surroundings.

These passionate complaints reverberate in the hearts of men as they never did before: “deep calleth unto deep.” The thunder mutters above us; the earthquake rumbles

beneath ; the social fabric is visibly cracking in many places. Unless the present system can be worked more equitably and generously, social experiments will undoubtedly be made which even the sanguine cannot contemplate without misgivings, nor the bold without fears.

It is obvious that the spirit of Jesus Christ, as described in the preceding chapter, would bring complete redress to every social wrong. For what are the ideal relations of men to one another in society ? Paley, in a charming passage, says : " A party of friends setting out together upon a journey, soon find it to be the best for all sides, that, while they are upon the road, one of the company should wait upon the rest, another ride forward to seek out lodging and entertainment, a third carry the portmanteau, a fourth take charge of the horses, a fifth bear the purse, conduct and direct the route ; not forgetting, however, that as they were equal and independent when they set out, so they are all to return to a level again at their journey's end. The same regard and respect, the same forbearance, lenity, and reserve in using their service, the same mildness in delivering commands, the same study to make their journey comfortable and pleasant, which he whose lot it was to direct the rest would in common decency think himself bound to observe towards them, ought we to show to those who, in the casting of the parts of human society, happen to be placed in our power or to depend upon us." ¹ What is all this but the Christian ideal, the Christian spirit in action ? And from what other source than Jesus Christ can inspiration and motive power for its realisation be drawn ?

¹ *Moral and Political Philosophy*, book iii., chap. ii.

Jesus Christ inspires those who yield themselves to Him with the purest benevolence, and this benevolence expresses itself in the charity which delights to relieve distress. Such charity, however, is at present regarded as a very equivocal virtue. On the one hand, it is clearly seen that it is often little better than a reckless indulgence of the sympathies, without any consideration of the effect produced on its object by encouraging vice, or on society by feeding the sources of misery. But truly Christian charity will avoid any act that degrades the individual by impairing character, or injures society by fostering evil. The very habit of self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others braces the moral nature, so that it does not shrink from that salutary severity which works towards moral ends. There is, however, a wide field for benevolence among the unfortunate who are virtuous and deserving. On the other hand, charity is often resented because it is thought to involve a denial of justice, and to have a tendency to foster arrogance in those who give and servility in those who take. But no such abuses can arise where it is regarded as simply a distribution among brethren of the bounties of the common Father, a distribution more equitable than falls out spontaneously in "the corrupted currents of this world." In no other light can charity be regarded by the true disciple of Jesus Christ. It is clear, then, that the Christian spirit would redress the wrongs and inequalities of the present form of social organisation, while retaining its advantages, by the free communication of the prosperous to the unhappy in all good things.

But it is a profound mistake to suppose that Christianity is in any sense pledged to the established method of organising

society. It is quite possible that a type of social organisation widely different from the present would provide more appropriate and adequate organs for the Christian spirit. The premature communism of the early Church may prove to be a significant presentiment, such as often appears in the early stages of an organism, of the final order of Christian society. If there be, as is affirmed, an irresistible organic tendency towards collectivism, it may be only another historical instance of the drift of things in the direction of the divine purpose. At the present time every Christian thinker ought to be occupied with the question, whether such changes as are proposed by the more enlightened and sober thinkers who call themselves Socialists would, or would not, result in a more Christian order of society. This question presents too many difficulties to be answered at once. Changes in a system so complex as human society have multitudinous and most unlikely consequences ; frequently the cure of one evil is the cause of another just as serious. If it be true, as some affirm, that the socialist organisation of society would extinguish freedom, arrest the development of the individual, and sacrifice moral to material good, it stands condemned from the Christian point of view. But if, as others maintain, it is simply the organised co-operation in which the strong help to bear the burdens of the weak ; if it is thus a standing recognition of the brotherhood of men, and a discipline of the feelings and habits which such a brotherhood implies and exercises ; if it would promote self-respect among the lowly, and afford them "leisure to be good" through the cultivation of their higher nature, while removing from those placed higher the equally corrupting temptations

of excessive wealth;—no Christian man can hesitate to further it. We cannot do more in the narrow limits of this lecture than call attention to this question, which only the superficial can imagine to be decided.

But even if it were clear that the collectivist form of organising society is essentially nobler than the individualist, the question arises, whether men as at present constituted are capable of working such a scheme. And the answer is hardly doubtful. For the maintenance of any system of which self-interest is not the mainspring, the idea of human brotherhood has not a sufficiently deep root in the general heart, the selfish instincts are not sufficiently subdued, nor the generous principles enough developed, the obligation of self-sacrifice for the good of others is too imperfectly recognised. A conspicuous Socialist bears emphatic witness to the truth of this assertion. "The socialist position sufficed on the economic side, but where to gain the inspiration, the motive, which should lead to the realisation of the brotherhood of man? Our efforts to organise bands of unselfish workers had failed. Much indeed had been done; but there was not a real movement of self-sacrificing devotion, in which men worked for love's sake only, and asked but to give, not to take. Where was the material for the nobler social order, where the hewn stones for the building of the temple of man? A great despair would oppress me as I sought for such a movement, and found it not."¹ Socialist forms of society can only be worked by men formed on the Christian type. Whether they would be congenial to men of such a type is doubtful; that they are utterly powerless to produce such

¹ Mrs. Annie Besant, *Autobiography*, pp. 338, 339.

men is certain. And what forces working in society have proved themselves to have this regenerative virtue except those that proceed from Jesus Christ?

But the influence of Jesus on the social movement is not confined to the general principles and sentiments with which He inspires those who believe in Him. There is much in the circumstances of His life, and in His specific teaching, which works to the same end. It is only recently that the full significance of His lowly birth could be perceived. What in the past has been regarded as a difficulty, we see to-day to have special value, because it commends Him to the sympathies of the masses of the people, who are constantly drawing to themselves a larger measure of influence and power. Nor can it fail to increase the interest of His disciples in those classes of the population out of which He sprang. To see the noblest man in all history arising among the common people suggests, on the lowest view, the possibilities of mankind in its humbler conditions, and makes us feel keenly that the distinction of classes is not based on difference of nature. On the highest view, we are impressively taught regard for the lowly, as we see God passing by wealth and rank and assuming flesh among them.¹ Jesus spent His life in want and poverty, and, if only by the influence of association, enlists sympathy for the poor and needy. The greatest of natural evils, and a main source of inequalities among men, bodily infirmity and sickness, He delighted to remove. It was mainly for this gracious purpose that His ministry violated the common order of human life, though even here He was working according to some law unknown

¹ Luke i. 51-53.

to us, as is proved by the fact that He required faith in those He healed. His strong judgment as to the unfavourable influence of riches on character must be regarded as to some extent a condemnation of social arrangements which encourage the growth of wealthy classes. Luxury and self-indulgence are put to shame, and self-sacrifice, the sum of all the virtues, is glorified by His life and death. The superfluous wealth of which He encouraged, and in some cases required, His followers to strip themselves, was to be given to the poor. His disciples had a common bag, and one of the purposes to which its contents were applied was the relief of poverty.¹ The claims of the poor had been so deeply impressed upon them, and made so sacred in their eyes, that, on one occasion, they were tempted to prefer them to the claims of Jesus Himself.² Finally, the effect of indigence on the moral life is recognised; those who are pressed by the cares of poverty are as unlikely as those deluded by wealth to receive and bring to maturity the germs of truth and goodness.³

Jesus Christ is the historical source of philanthropy. "The provident humanity which, without seeking its own happiness, takes the part of the suffering section of mankind, and requires and performs deeds of justice and of mercy, was something very foreign to the ancient world, and in the new world it has no more powerful source than Christianity."⁴ It has been well said that compassion is a virtue that had not been "discovered," or "brought out," until Christ came. But in the list of Christian virtues it

¹ John xiii. 29.

² Matt. xxvi. 8-11.

³ Mark iv. 19.

⁴ Lotze's *Microcosmus*, vol. ii. p. 273.

has ever had a high, if not the highest, place. It immediately devoted itself to the redress of wrongs; it has persevered through the ages, and is more active to-day than ever. It will not rest until it has consummated its work and created a "new earth." Some say that Christianity has lost its miraculous powers; but, whenever the love and pity of Jesus are found, deeds are wrought which the selfish and cold cannot possibly account for. And when all who feel this love and pity organise themselves for charity as men do for industry, and employ the instruments which science supplies, a new era will open for philanthropy, and the "days of the Son of man" will come back again.

But mere philanthropy has its limits. With the unfortunate, the poor, and the sick, it is able to deal, but the vicious are beyond its power. And, after all, a large proportion of human suffering has its roots in vice. With vice the ethics of evolution have only one way of dealing: making or keeping the conditions of life so hard, that the process of extermination, which nature sets up, shall not be hindered. A leading representative of this school has intimated his disbelief in the possibility of changing character.¹ But this method cannot be applied. All that makes the general conditions of life milder favours the vicious, for it is impossible to isolate them. They are not a separate class, as some suppose; they are joined to the honest and the good by ties which society cannot afford to have enfeebled. And this method is

¹ Leslie Stephen, *Fielding's Works*, vol. i., p. xciv. J. Cotter Morison says, "There is no remedy for a bad heart, and no substitute for a good one"—*The Service of Man*, p. 216.

repulsive to every feeling heart. The more society is saturated with compassion the less available it is.¹ How then shall we deal with vice? Is society to have this cancer always in its vitals? No means of converting the vicious have been approved by the experience of man except the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not the will of His Father that the least or worst of them should perish. He Himself was the Friend of publicans and sinners. He brought to them, and still brings, the two things they need most, hope and help ;—the hope that the love of God kindles, the help that the Spirit of God affords.

We see, then, that all hope of the solution of our social problems centres in Jesus Christ. He is a living Fountain of influences which will relieve the unfortunate and regenerate the evil.

II

Another marked feature of the present age is the increase of intercourse between the various peoples of the earth. For the first time in history world-wide communications have been established. The leading nations, however far apart their dwellings lie, have full intelligence of each other, and even the remotest tribes have been drawn in some degree into the general life. The civilised peoples are emulously taking possession of every tract in which the population is scanty, or the government in-

¹ Professor Huxley saw clearly that "the active or passive extirpation" of the evil members of society is impossible.—*Collected Essays*, vol. ix., p. 36.

"The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence. . . . But the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilisation. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step."—*Ibid.*, p. 81.

capable, and bringing neighbouring tribes into relations of dependence. "Commerce is uniting all parts of the earth into a single economic whole." The advantages of the mechanical inventions are so great and manifest, that they are sure before long to be adopted everywhere, and they will inevitably carry in their train science and scientific ways of thinking. All these tendencies must work a transformation of the nations to which history supplies no parallel. In saying this we do not forget how dense and impervious the masses of mankind are; we only allow for the fact that these influences are cumulative in their action.

All periods of history, whether before or after the birth of Christ, in which the different peoples have been brought into closer contact, have had deep religious significance. One illustration of this truth is the period in which Israel was drawn into the midstream of Oriental history; and another, the period when the Crusades caused a free circulation between the East and West of Europe. But the most striking, because the best known, example is the era of the consolidation of the Roman empire. The greatest of living historians, Mommsen, says: "The great final result of the Roman government, the union of all the widely different nations under it in a uniform body of Roman citizens, required, in replacement of their different creeds, a religion adapted to the new order of things, to the united empire, and thus the Christian religion became the religion of civilised humanity."¹ The ties between the various parts of the Roman world, however, were few and slight compared to the bonds which are being forged

¹ For a summary of the causes, see Introduction, p. 5. See also Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 190-192.

between the different nations of the modern world. The question of a universal religion, then, is no longer an academical, but is rapidly becoming a practical question.

There are at least three ways in which a free circulation among the nations of the earth will tend to destroy their indigenous religions: (1) When these religions confront each other with all their discrepancies and contradictions, their falsehood will be exposed. (2) Most of these religions are adapted to certain intellectual and social conditions, and cannot live in any other. As these conditions change, the beliefs and practices which correspond to them will perish. (3) The new ideas which follow in the wake of European civilisation will stimulate criticism among the more thoughtful, which will be as fatal to false religions as philosophy was to paganism.

But all history, as well as the very structure of the human mind, forbids us to think that men will be able to do without religion. Something which supplies a rational end of human life and of the universe, the satisfaction of their higher instincts and hopes, an effectual sanction for right conduct, and firm ties to bind them to each other, they will always require. Nothing but a religion can meet this demand.

Among the religions of the nations, is there any one which will supply this vital need of mankind? The circumstances of the time have afforded us a knowledge of them such as no previous age has possessed. Until recently, it was often dreamed that, in delightful valleys beyond the bounds of our corrupting civilisations, men were living innocent and happy lives under the influence of simple, generous creeds. In this sphere, as in others, knowledge

has brought disenchantment. The universal religion is not to be found among any tribe dwelling in idyllic conditions far away. Nor can any of the great historical religions, except Christianity, fill this all-important place. Without unduly depreciating them,—which no intelligent Christian apologist will ever do,—it is impossible to suppose for a moment that Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, not to mention others, can supply even the outline or basis of a universal religion. The more carefully we study them, the more plainly we see that they are confined to certain lands, certain stages of culture, certain forms of social structure, by a law of nature. No serious student of comparative religion would hesitate to admit that they are all inferior to Christianity in their range of adaptation, as well as in their power to satisfy the human heart. And this verdict of science is confirmed by history.

But is Christianity positively fitted to become a universal religion? or may we expect that, out of the new conditions, new forms of faith and worship, in harmony with them, will arise? Of the latter we can indulge no strong hope, as we see the failures, at once ludicrous and pathetic, of all modern makers of religion. Despairing of invention, an eminent student of the religions of mankind has lately proposed that a universal faith should be drawn up, by taking the greatest common measure of actual religious beliefs. How pitiful are the efforts of the laboratory to play the part of Nature, and by its sparks and vapours to do what can only be done by the broad sunshine and the general air!

The more carefully we study the religion of Jesus Christ, its nature, its impulses, and its history, the more

clearly we see how perfectly it is fitted to be the religion of all mankind. We say the religion of Jesus Christ, rather than Christianity, because historical Christianity in its various forms is only, at the best, an adaptation to different lands and civilisations of the truth as it is in Jesus, and is far from exhausting all its possibilities. Indeed, in some current forms of Christianity there are elements that can be traced, not to Jesus Christ, but to religions which have already perished. But in the religion which Jesus taught, and commended by His life and death, there is nothing which cannot be beneficially adopted by any nation under heaven.

The theology of the gospels appeals to the general heart. God is represented as a Father, *i.e.* as standing towards men in a relationship of which each man has had experience, either as son or as father, or as both,—a relationship charged with the deepest feeling and the sweetest joy. The reality of sin is recognised, in harmony with the universal conscience. Sin has disfigured, but not obliterated, the image of God in man; it has left man lost, but redeemable. In His great love God took the form of man, and lived a human life. This life was singularly simple, made up of common elements, with nothing to remove it from the understanding or sympathy of ordinary men. The divine teaching is universally intelligible, demanding neither culture nor initiation in the hearer. The ethics of the gospel have the same note of universality. They deal with the relations of men as men. The precepts are few and simple, yet they exhaust all duty, and are as comprehensive as life. Though the natural conscience did not discover them, it instantly responds to them. They draw

no motive from political or social relations, which change from age to age and pass away. The ritual of the gospel is simplicity itself. Its materials are bread, and wine, and water; its acts eating, drinking, and washing. All other forms are to be determined by the impulses and needs of the devout heart, according to external conditions. The more carefully the religion of the gospel is compared with the other religions of mankind, the more clearly will be seen its secret affinity with all in them that is true and good, and its complete immunity from their errors and vices. The new science of comparative religion is destined to become one of the most effective weapons of Christian apologetics,—the more effective, the greater the respect we have for the ethnic religions.

The Christian Church has had from the beginning the instinct of universality. The mission of Jesus was for many reasons confined to Israel; but there can be no doubt, though it has been denied, that He contemplated the universal spread of His gospel. Indeed, to maintain the contrary would be to affirm that Jesus neither perceived the range nor felt the power of His own teaching, though they were immediately recognised by St. Paul, and could not be resisted even by the strong prejudices of the slower apostles. The very name the Church has given itself expresses the universality of its aim and destiny. This catholicity is solemnly affirmed in its most authoritative creeds. And in every period of its history its missionary impulse has been powerful or feeble in proportion to its general life.

There is no more remarkable fact in history, than that after the lapse of nineteen centuries this impulse should

operate, not only in unabated, but even in increased vigour. For this long period has been full of disappointments. In the holy warfare there have been losses as well as gains. Whole regions which the Church once occupied have relapsed into heathenism, or have been conquered by Islam. But the Church was never so earnestly missionary as it is to-day. It follows closely in the steps of the explorer, the trader, the colonist, and often prepares their way. It enters through every breach that war has made, in order to heal and pacify. It is using all the multiplied resources of the modern world, its facilities of intercourse, its wider knowledge. It is the faith of those nations whose numbers are increasing most rapidly, and whose dominion is extending every day. All over the earth it is winning great victories; greater probably than in any other period of its history. These victories follow the law of its earliest successes. First of all, the rude, isolated religions as we find them in the islands of the sea, then the religions which hang on the outskirts of the great consolidated religions of the world, and, finally, those giant systems themselves, with roots like the oak and boughs like the cedar, will be subdued. Not only in lands such as Fiji and Madagascar, but even in India, important conquests have been made. The greatest authority on India, Sir W. W. Hunter, says: "To careful and unprejudiced observers, it seems that in the next generation it will be no longer merely a question of an Indian Christian Church, but of the growth of a Christian Indian people, as an important and recognised addition to the races and peoples of that empire." And as in the past new forms of Christian thought, fresh possibilities of Christian character, have been developed whenever the religion of Christ has been established

among a new people, so it will be in time to come, and the full glory of Jesus Christ will only be reflected when the Church is catholic in reality as well as in name, and, though various in form one in spirit and in life.

III

Before we conclude, we must consider briefly the question of evidence. It is said that George Eliot was perfectly satisfied with the Christian religion and morality, and only declined to believe because she did not consider the evidence adduced sufficient to sustain them; and there can be no doubt that many men are in the same position. For a while thinkers were dazzled by the triumphs of science, with its rigorous methods and its exacting standard of proof, and were led to carry these instruments into spheres where they are not so applicable. They were in danger of thinking that no article ought to be allowed in any creed which does not admit of absolute demonstration. But they have come to take a more reasonable view of the nature of evidence. This is partly a result of the critical philosophy, which has shown that all speculation lands us at last in hopeless antinomies of thought. Mr. Spencer has pointed out as clearly as Mr. Balfour, that underlying all the sciences there are assumptions which can no more be proved than they can be got rid of.¹ We have ceased to expect rigorous demonstration outside mathematics, and only in that science because it is occupied with reasoning from definite postulates. We recognise

¹ "Modern agnosticism is performing this great service to Christian faith: it is silencing all rational scepticism of the *à priori* kind."—Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 166.

clearly that, as Aristotle says, the subject-matter determines the nature of the proof which it is reasonable to require.

In order to establish fully the position taken up in this lecture, two lines of argument are required. It must be shown, first, that the gospels are an authentic record of the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ. It would not, of course, be necessary to carry this proof so far as to support a theory of verbal inspiration, but only so far as to establish the general facts as to His life and teaching which are assumed in these chapters. It would be necessary, secondly, to prove that what has thus been shown to be the actual teaching of Jesus Christ concerning God and man is something more than a mystic reverie which is shattered to pieces by collision with indubitable facts, that it is in harmony with all that we certainly know, and that it receives all the verification which it is reasonable to demand in such matters.

The first of these branches of proof would require a whole lecture, and ought not to be touched unless it can be thoroughly treated. We shall therefore pass it by, and this the more readily because the general authenticity of, at any rate, the synoptical gospels has been vindicated again and again in recent years, and would be granted by the great majority of those who are interested in religious questions, even though they are unable to accept many of our conclusions. It is becoming generally recognised that some such facts as the gospels relate are absolutely required if the most important movement in history is to have an adequate cause. In one and the same age there arose a Person who is proved by what He has accomplished in the world to be unique, and

a literature professing to be a record of His life which is almost as remarkable among writings as He among men. It would be more wonderful than any miracle recorded in the gospels if the two did not largely answer to each other, and if the unique man has little or no memorial and the unique record has little or no actuality.

The second branch of proof opens up two questions. (1) Is there any established truth which forbids the acceptance of the doctrine of Jesus Christ? (2) Is there any positive verification of that doctrine? In regard to the first of these questions, there is an impression abroad in some quarters, that some of the assured results of physical science are irreconcilable with the truth as it is in Jesus. But when from both we have separated the speculative doctrines which have been associated and even confounded with them, we see how far this is from being the case.

Physical science has often been supposed to warrant certain metaphysical tenets which are held by a few of its prominent representatives: *e.g.* that there is no spiritual principle in the universe,—no God in the world, no soul in man,—but only matter, motion, and force; that free will, on which the whole Christian theodicy rests, is a delusion; and that the uniformity of Nature is so absolute as to exclude miracles. It is a little thing to say that natural science has not proved these affirmations; it never can prove them, for they relate to what is utterly beyond its range.¹ We must therefore set free from all such metaphysical additions the facts which science has established, and the theories which are the legitimate generalisations

¹ Huxley's *Collected Essays*, vol. i., p. 162; Mozley's *On Miracles*, pp. 44, 45.

of these facts. On the other hand, we must take the religion of Jesus in its native simplicity. We do not mean by that, as is clear from our exposition, reducing it to a few plain rules of conduct by evacuating it of all its deepest truths. Indeed, it will be found that these rules of conduct are by no means plain, except in connexion with profound spiritual truths. The profoundest truths are often the most simple.

Evermore the deepest words of God
Are yet the easiest to understand.

When we speak of the simplicity of Christ's teaching, we mean that it assumes only the universal relations of human life, and the deepest, purest feelings of the general heart, such as the simple possess and the cultured retain. It is like light, which requires only the common eye, and not a refined artistic sense, to respond to it. We merely seek to distinguish what Jesus actually taught from the forms in which from time to time it has been presented. Christian truth has taken in every age the mould of the prevailing philosophy. This was necessary if it would be useful, or even acceptable, to men. And these varied forms have displayed the wealth of its contents and its living power of adaptation. It is remarkable that the same essential truths should have been capable of being presented in the forms of thought which ruled in Alexandria in the second century, and in the widely different forms of thought which prevailed in England in the eighteenth century. But the essential truth of Christianity bears about the same relation to the varying philosophies in the forms of which it has been attired, as the human

body bears to the changing fashions of dress. Therefore, however firmly we may believe that some particular scientific statement of the Trinity, of the origin of evil, or of the atonement, may follow from Christ's teaching as to His divine Sonship, as to sin, and as to His own death, it is of the utmost importance to distinguish carefully between the two. Now, when we have separated from science the metaphysics which have been so often confounded with it, and from the religion of Jesus the philosophy which has been so often regarded as a part of its essence, we affirm without misgiving that the two do not conflict. As far as they come into connexion, they are in harmony; but they belong for the most part to altogether different regions of being.¹

But is there any positive verification of the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Of course our appeal is to reason, the only faculty by which we can possibly pass from one truth to another. That inward acceptance of authority called faith, which has been so falsely regarded as the antithesis of reason, is really one of its most comprehensive acts. Among the processes of reason there are some which it is possible to resolve, to set forth in successive

¹ Since writing the above, we have met with the following striking confirmation from one specially qualified to judge:—

“One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favour of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has had to discount. This negative evidence is really almost as strong as is the positive argument from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any of His words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete.”—*Romanes' Thoughts on Religion*, p. 157.

steps, and to test at every point; we call them specifically reasoning or ratiocination. But there are other processes of reason, not essentially different in their nature, which are too complex, too subtle, too intricate for such presentation. This is usually the case where the facts are multitudinous, obscure, and cumulative in their action. Without such an exercise of reason the human mind could not develop, nor human life proceed, and it often issues in the firmest of all certainties. The capital instance of a certainty so attained is, of course, the immovable belief in an external world.

It may be said generally, that it is impossible adequately to support moral and spiritual truth by formal reasoning. To see this, let us take as an example an elementary maxim of morals, "Honesty is the best policy." It is possible to bring forward instances in which, often in spite of all likelihood, it has turned out to be so; but what are they to support so wide a generalisation? All that argument can do is to remove difficulties out of the way, so that an honest man may rest in the testimony of those who have gone before him, testimony corroborated by what he has gathered in multitudinous casual experiences of his own, and confirmed by his intuitive conviction, that two principles planted so deeply in his breast as honesty and self-interest cannot be at war in the world. This impotence of reasoning accounts for the fact that the greatest teachers in the highest spheres of thought have made a very sparing use of it. Their method has been to bring the truth and the minds of men enlightened by experience into contact with each other, and confidently abide the issue. And when they have stooped to reasoning, there has

generally been a striking disproportion between the force of their arguments and the strength of their convictions.

With stronger reason, then, we may assert that a whole system of moral and spiritual truth like the religion of Jesus Christ cannot be established by formal reasoning; and it is not surprising that Jesus Himself made little or no use of it.¹ But there have been periods in the history of the Church when such ratiocination was regarded as the main ground of Christian certainty. It must deal with definite matter, and that which lay nearest to hand was the miraculous element in the ministry of our Lord. The argument ran thus: Jesus Christ worked miracles; to work miracles proves the possession, for the time at least, of divine power; one who wields the power of God must speak the truth of God: therefore the revelation of Jesus Christ ought to be accepted. But it is not probable that this argument has ever been practically as effective as was generally supposed. As the most tangible part of a whole body of evidence, there has been attributed to it a virtue which really resided in other parts of the system with which it was connected. It is an argument which it is easy to elude. A scientific age like the present eludes it by demanding impossible evidence before it will admit the facts;² ages not so scientific, by denying that the wonders wrought, though they may be superhuman, necessarily imply divine agency. Just now, miracles, though meeting with

¹ "The sublimest things He told the people He assumed that they in their secret hearts must know."—Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, p. 322.

² Huxley's *Hume*, pp. 134–139. A recent thoroughgoing opponent of miracles confesses that unbelievers often "demand an amount and species of evidence which in the circumstances is quite unattainable and out of the question."—Mackintosh, *Natural History of the Christian Religion*, p. 21.

far less objection on either *à priori* or historical grounds than they encountered a quarter of a century ago, and possessing great force to confirm what is otherwise supported, because they might reasonably be looked for in the given circumstances and could hardly occur in any other, are still, if used alone, rather a hindrance than a help.

The fact is, a whole system of spiritual truth can only be received by one of those large and comprehensive judgments to which every part of our nature contributes. When all the faculties of a man, moulded by the experience of countless generations, and instructed by the experience of his own individual life, confront a body of spiritual truth, certain impressions are made upon them, and these impressions combine organically in a definite judgment. Such a judgment is unanalysable, because the elements which compose it are multitudinous and indefinite; but it is deserving of the greatest respect, if man's nature is not thoroughly irrational, especially when similar judgments are found in vast multitudes of men through the course of centuries. For this wide consent implies that there is no authoritative principle of human nature, no general experience of man's life, in conflict with it. And when it is strongest in the best and most enlightened men, confidence in it is increased.

When a man with the seriousness and ardour which such pursuits require, and with the self-knowledge usually involved in such dispositions, stands face to face with the truth as it is in Jesus, he finds a singular correspondence between it and all that he instinctively feels to be truest in his thoughts, purest in his feelings, noblest in his tendencies, and deepest in his needs. His intuitions, reasonings, sym-

pathies, aspirations,—evoked by convictions and emotions deep as the belief in God, piercing as the sense of sin, stern as the imperative of duty, sweet as filial or paternal love, melting as grief, vague as that drawing towards the infinite and eternal which has been recently called the *nostalgie* of the soul,—all these elements and many others coalesce and consolidate in a judgment that the doctrine of Jesus is true and the person of Jesus divine. This judgment is confirmed by the consideration that it is shared by millions of the best men who have ever lived.

It is further strengthened when he sees that the teaching and influence of Jesus not only are in harmony with the nobler workings of his mind, but also bring to them additional support and complete satisfaction. His instinct of dependence is vindicated and satisfied, his sense of sin is deepened and relieved, the moral effort of his conscience is stimulated and assisted, the thirst of his soul for fulness of life and joy is allayed at immortal springs. He is brought into the presence of something which answers to his nature as the sun with its quickening virtue answers to the earth and to all the seeds that sleep in its bosom. That the influence of our Lord is thus vital and fruitful and salutary, is established on a broad scale by the verdict of history. As we have seen, in proportion as it has prevailed it has transformed human nature and society.

The force of these considerations is indefinitely increased, when he recognises further that the religion of Jesus Christ, or something like it, is absolutely necessary as a support to the nature and life of man. We see this clearly if we consider the creed which seems to be the only reasonable alternative to it. This creed has never been

presented in a summary, for reasons sufficiently obvious, but its articles are such as these: The world is the product of no personal will; no mind is expressed in its order, no spirit in its beauty. Its development does not proceed in harmony with any preconceived plan, or to any beneficent or even intelligible end. Blindly out of matter and force were evolved life and feeling, with all their awful possibilities. The process of evolution through the survival of the fittest finally issued in man. He is the most misguided of all beings, and in the course of his development has plunged deeper and deeper into error. He imagines that his will is free, that the claim of duty is absolute, that he is responsible to some higher power; he accuses himself of sin, and loads himself with guilt. These convictions and sentiments, which the experience of the race has wrought into his heart, which have been strongest in the best men, which have been the most powerful springs of progress, are delusions. Righteousness and love have seemed to him so august, that he has thought they must occupy a higher seat than his own breast; as attributes of a personal God, he has placed them on the throne of heaven. To them he has addressed his appeals and urged his entreaties, and has thought that he was heard. Religions have arisen, with imposing institutions, elaborate rites, and costly sacrifices; they have supplied the sanctions of morality and the bonds of society: but they are all superstitions. Blind, unfeeling forces enter into conflict with man at his birth, and win a complete victory in his utter extinction at death. All life will be destroyed at last, and the great globe itself will become a frigid, barren mass: "it began as a gas, and will end as a glacier."

Such a creed is impossible. It will not suffice for "such creatures as men, in such a world as this."¹ The life of man never has been lived upon it, and never can be. There is nothing in it to enable us to do our duty, to help us to endure pain or face death, to inspire generosity or kindle heroism. It will not maintain the fair order of human society. Pessimism is its philosophy, hedonism its morality, and a coarse, repulsive realism its art. Its effect on the world can only be imaged by the perpetual frost in which, we are told, the beauty and glory of the earth are to be swallowed up when the solar system shall have lost its vital heat.

We have said that this devitalising creed is the only reasonable alternative to the religion of Christ, because as soon as a man recoils from it, and at the suggestion and for the satisfaction of his moral nature admits the existence of a personal God with moral attributes,—the Creator, Ruler, and Guide of the world,—he has overcome almost all the difficulties which attend the acceptance of the Christian creed. Indeed, it is not too much to say, that at every step he takes towards Christ the theist drops a difficulty. That a Being out of whose voluntary activity the world has issued, who has allowed what Tertullian calls the great "intruders" sin and sorrow to enter it, who is the ultimate source of the deep thirst of the human soul for goodness and happiness, should not have interposed to restore the order, so palpably and ruinously broken, in the moral sphere, is incredible.² But if there has been any such interposition, shall we not find it in the religions of

¹ Butler, Sermon xii.

² Chareot said in his last days, "Pour moi il y a un Dieu ; mais il est bien loin."—*Revue Philosophique*, June, 1895.

men, and especially in the religion of Jesus Christ, which is incomparably the highest of them all?

The conclusion to which men are thus led, by the very "make of their nature" and the necessities of their life, is confirmed by the experience of those who, on the strength of it, have made the venture of faith. This inference from experience is not as unscientific as is commonly supposed. The test of truth is prediction, and the discourses of Jesus abound in such predictions as may easily be verified. The boldest and most unlikely propositions have been advanced by Him. Such an one is that which Matthew Arnold in his interesting way calls the "secret of Jesus": "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Another is that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Of such a character, too, are His declarations that the poor in spirit, the meek, and men persecuted for righteousness' sake are blessed; that those who leave all and follow Him shall find abundant recompense even in this life; that the pure in heart shall see God; that all who seek first the kingdom of God shall have their needs supplied; that all who ask in faith shall receive good things, and especially the best of all good things, the Holy Spirit; or, to put it all into one word, that they who come to Him, learn of Him, and accept His yoke, shall find rest unto their souls. Multitudes of men have believed and acted on these predictions, and they have borne unqualified and overwhelming testimony to their fulfilment. They witness that through growing purity they have become as sure of the existence of God as of their own existence, as conscious of fellowship with Him as of fellowship with each other; that from His love they

have received good gifts, above all, His own transforming Spirit, which has wrought wondrous and most gracious effects within them. They affirm that the blessedness which Christ promised through most unlikely means has been realised: that as they denied themselves their pleasures multiplied; that as they gave away they were enriched; that as they suffered they abounded the more in joy; that loving submission to Him was rest and satisfaction, "life indeed." On this experience has been founded the greatest of all human institutions, the Christian Church; it has produced the most prolific branch of human literature; almost as many acts of self-sacrifice have been performed on the strength of it as at the prompting of the parental instinct. This testimony is not confined to a single race or to one generation; it is age-long, world-wide. It has been well said that the Christian religion "would hardly have maintained its hold upon our race throughout the ages, unless verified in ways and degrees that we can better guess than gauge. For it is the old, we must remember, and not the young, who transmit the traditions of religion; those, that is, who have acquired assurance by the inner experience of a lifetime, and can add the comment of their own conviction to the text."¹ And this testimony is unbroken. It is hardly going too far to say that in all that curious literature of the human heart, the "confessions" into which it has poured its most intimate experiences,—a sad record of disappointments and disillusiones,—there are no pages which even hint that Jesus has betrayed the hopes of those who trusted Him.

The verification of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which

¹ Illingworth, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 171.

we have briefly and inadequately suggested, may be summed up in the following propositions:—

1. The judgment in regard to the system of truth as it is in Jesus which has been formed by countless multitudes of the best men, through the combined action of all their faculties, guided by the whole of their experience, has the highest validity.

2. The spiritual provision implied, suggested, and imperatively required by the type of character which is the consummate product of the whole course of human development is to be found somewhere in the system of things, and, if so, undoubtedly in Jesus Christ. This is not arguing from man's wishes to their gratification, but from his vital needs to their satisfaction. It only assumes that our highest faculties are not irrational, that our noblest impulses are not misguided, and that "the mighty hopes that make us men" are not baseless.

3. There is an overwhelming body of testimony that the boldest and, in some cases, the most unlikely affirmations of Jesus Christ on the deepest of all human interests have been established by the prolonged experience of mankind.

As the doctrine of Jesus Christ, then, is in conflict with no established truth; as it is in complete accord with the best elements of human nature, supplying to them a nourishment and support without which they would wither and die; and as it has received the abundant confirmation of an almost boundless experience,—we may rest on it with untroubled confidence, apply it fearlessly to the social conditions of our own land, and send it forth to bless the whole earth.

CONCLUSION

CONSULTING only those simple records of His life and teaching which are inexplicable unless they are authentic, and regarding only the truths which plainly bear His signature unless the whole is fiction, we see the transcendent and unique significance of Jesus Christ. To the present age, as to previous ages, He supplies the greatest of all its needs, a religion which is in conflict with none of its established truths and principles, which sanctions and supports all its best tendencies, both spiritual and moral, while correcting what is false, and counteracting what is bad. It is free from the perils of either of the two contending types of social organisation, and combines within itself the excellences of both. Though arising among the most exclusive of all peoples, in a period peculiarly jealous of foreign influences, it contains nothing which is merely national, local, or temporary. The failures and disappointments of nineteen centuries have not in the least enfeebled its instinct of universality. It has within it more aggressive energy than at any previous period of its history. It is clearly destined to supersede all other religions, and bind the world together, as only a common religion can.

It seems to the present writer that the practical virtue of Christianity resides in the simple, deep, powerful truths so imperfectly elicited and presented in these pages. To set

them forth vividly as Jesus did, to illustrate them from His life, to enforce them by the tender and impressive sanction of His death, is the function of Christian preaching. It is possible to smother them in dogmatic forms which prevent the conscience from recognising their certainty, and the heart from feeling their power. To turn from the human life of God to theological systems is like turning from a garden all in bloom to a *hortus siccus*.

And yet scientific theology has its place in the Church. Not a single word in disparagement of it has been intentionally uttered in this lecture. The intellect cannot refrain from working on the vital truths of Christianity, and from trying to interpret them by setting them in their true relation to each other and to the rest of human knowledge. The results are seen in the theological systems which have, from time to time, found acceptance. Each age, as represented by its greatest sons, has been dissatisfied with the systems handed down to it, and has sought to frame others more congenial to itself. The history of these successive systems proves that they have not the certainty of the facts which they endeavour to collate and interpret; but it shows, at the same time, that they arise out of an invincible necessity of the human mind. A scientific age like the present, which has the ambition to explain in a synthetic philosophy the illimitable universe, will not be able permanently to discard theology. It is only making a more profound and exact study of the facts, as its methods require. It will then proceed to systematise and to interpret them in the light of accepted truth in other spheres of knowledge. Indeed, its temporary impatience with theology springs mainly from a conviction that that

science in the past has to some extent neglected and forgotten the facts on which it rests, and has been shaped and influenced by scientific and philosophical conceptions which are no longer tenable. Other systems, however, are sure to arise in closer harmony with the truth as it is in Jesus and with our wider knowledge.

1. It is quite obvious that the simplest of the gospels suggests questions of the deepest import and the widest range. First of all, what is the relation between the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and His authentic revelation in the course of nature? A new "analogy," more positive and fruitful in its results, waits to be written when a mind as profound and sagacious as that of Butler applies itself to the task. For there can be no doubt that God's relation to the world, and the method of His government, are better understood now than they were a century ago. To single out only one question among many that emerge in this connexion: How can we harmonize the miraculous element which is so prominent even in the earliest biography of Jesus with that principle of the uniformity of nature which is the postulate of all our science?

2. But not simply in its relation to the system of nature does the religion of Jesus Christ raise questions of the deepest interest. Such questions arise out of its very essence. The irrepressible enquiry of every heart that feels for itself His charm and power, and observes His profound and salutary influence in human history is, Who is Jesus Christ? what is His rank in the scale of being? As we have seen, the only answer in harmony with the doctrine and claims of Jesus Himself is that He is God manifest in the flesh. But He ever represents Himself as

personally distinct from God the Father. He speaks also of a spiritual Power working in the hearts of men which is clearly divine and personal, for against it sin may be committed,—sin unpardonable and indelible. These intimations raise questions as to the nature of the Godhead which the Christian intellect is compelled reverently to consider, and to answer according to its lights.

3. The belief that God was incarnate in Jesus Christ stimulates further enquiry in all who accept it. What does it postulate as to the affinity of God and man? What are the relations of the divine and human natures thus joined together? Does the divine nature enter into this union in its full efficiency, and the human nature in its complete integrity? These enquiries are not to be put by; the interdict of Positivism is as futile in this as in other spheres. The living correspondence between Christian theology and the Christian religion is revealed in the fact that the question which has always been the most interesting to the former relates to the matter which is most vital to the latter,—the Person of our Lord.

4. Compelling thought, too, is the death in which the divine Life ended so tragically, and, as it seems to us, so prematurely. That death must have had its predetermined place in the purpose of God which it appears so violently to arrest. What is that place? As the deepest offence of man against the majesty and love of God, the cross startles every serious mind into thought about human sin. Even beyond all other elements in our Lord's work, it provokes an earnest effort to discover what sin is, to get at its roots in the nature of man. In tracing these roots we soon come to the dark foundations of the individual soul in the race

at large. How far does guilt attach to sin? and how is this guilt to be distributed as personal and collective? As we have seen, Jesus Himself set His death in a direct relation to the forgiveness of sins. Through the three most powerful senses, and the most vital of all functions, eating and drinking, He sought to impress this connexion on the hearts of His disciples. All other forms of instruction and of worship He left to their free disposition, but this He fixed Himself in the most vivid hours of His fellowship with them. His words, His acts, the occasion itself, are full of sacrificial suggestions. What is the significance of sacrifice as viewed historically? What were the ideas associated with it in the minds of the disciples whom it was His purpose to enlighten? In what sense may we conclude the death of Christ to be a sacrifice for sin fore-ordained by God? We cannot refuse to ponder these questions with all the aid which psychology, history, and exegesis supply.

5. Again, what is the relation of the religion of Jesus Christ to the religions which it is appointed to supersede? With regard to the only religion with which He came into personal contact, Jesus taught that it was a divine economy, but imperfect and transitory, containing mingled elements, some of which were to be preserved and perfected, while others were to be abolished. This teaching was assimilated, interpreted, and impressed finally on the Church by the inspired and providentially disciplined genius of St. Paul. When Christianity was established among the Gentile religions, the question took a wider range, and the Greek Fathers offer an answer suggestive, but not final. In its conflict with the hoary religions of the East, in which through

millenniums men have lived and died, the question returns upon the Church, and demands an answer from its teachers.

6. Further, we find bound up with the biographies of Jesus with which we have been occupied a number of other writings ascribed for the most part to His apostles. One is a fourth life of Christ, which appears at first sight to differ widely from the other three, but is found on closer examination to be in fundamental agreement with them. After the unsparing criticism of half a century, it is beginning to be generally acknowledged that its substance can hardly come from any other writer than St. John. In him alone are found all the qualifications which must have coexisted in the author. "If the St. John of history did not exist, he would have to be invented to account for his gospel."¹ There are also a number of letters from St. John and other of the apostles, including St. Paul.

That the speculative questions to which we have referred inevitably arise among those who accept the facts of Christ's teaching and life is confirmed by these writings. For they show that such questions had begun to stir in the minds of the earliest Christian teachers, and were of deep interest to the Churches. To their solution each apostolic writer more or less contributes. What is the authority and value of these contributions? According to all analogy, from elective affinity merely we should expect to find round Jesus a circle peculiarly susceptible to His ideas and influence. Every great man forms a school of sympathetic minds; all high teaching reverberates powerfully in the hearts of those who first receive it. The only writer of the epistles (with the exception of the unknown

¹ Sanday, *Study of the New Testament*, pp. 28, 29.

author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) who had not lived for some time in the society of Jesus—St. Paul—affirms, and even asseverates, that he received his gospel by direct revelation from Him, and it is hardly possible to doubt the truth of a conviction which lay at the root of the noblest and most fruitful of merely human lives. From the necessity of the case Jesus had left His revelation incomplete. Is it not likely that special help would be given to those who were to continue His work, and to take the first decisive steps in its interpretation? In this connexion it is important to remember that Jesus is said to have promised this special aid, and that the apostles claimed to have received it. Lastly, the writings themselves show evidence of it in their superiority to the literature arising in the early Church from those who never profess to have obtained it. On all these grounds, it is impossible to deny to the apostolic writings unique significance and value, or to avoid estimating carefully the measure of their inspiration.

7. Finally, out of the work of Jesus Christ, and in harmony with His purpose, there arose a divine institution,—the Christian Church. In each of its true members the Spirit of God dwells, endowing him with graces and powers by the purging and hallowing of his natural qualities. The co-operation and balance of these individual gifts constitutes the corporate life of the Church, which is further enlightened and guided by the accumulated lessons of its lengthening history. From these considerations alone, it is obvious that what may be called the natural authority of the Church—the authority arising out of its structure and experience—must be great. Some affirm that there is also attached to it, by the ordination of our Lord Him-

self, a direct and divine authority. What is the precise nature and measure of ecclesiastical authority? and where does it reside? This question can only be answered after deep consideration of the constitution, the authentic notes, the corporate functions, and the history of the Church.

It is clear, then, that out of the teaching of Jesus Christ, even as we find it in the simplest of the gospels, deep and far-reaching questions arise concerning the nature of the Godhead, the relations both psychological and historical of God and men, the unity of the human race, sin, guilt, propitiation, and inspiration. And it is further clear that these are not questions of mere curiosity, but are charged with practical interest. Creed, worship, moral discipline, missionary methods—the whole system of individual and Church life—are affected by the answers we accept.

To these questions answers have been proposed from time to time by rash and inconsiderate thinkers,—answers clearly out of harmony with the original truths of Christianity, as is obviously the case with most of the opinions rejected by the Church as heresy. On these occasions Christian teachers have been compelled to ponder more deeply the scheme of their faith, and have, with more or less authority, put forth decisions intended to protect the primary truths from misinterpretation. Such decisions are embodied in creeds and confessions.

Scientific theology is an attempt to deal with these questions in a systematic form. It calls to its aid all human knowledge that can shed a ray of light upon them. The historical student finds that its features differ widely from period to period in the history of the Church.

These differences spring largely from the qualities and endowments of the races which have successively presided over its development. The Greeks, with their speculative bent and philosophical equipment, the Latin race, with its system of jurisprudence and its instinct for government, the Teutonic peoples, with their deep sense of personal responsibility and their passion for liberty, have produced characteristic theological systems. The differences are also due, in part, to the changes in intellectual and political conditions from age to age. They are largely due, finally, to the various degrees of distinctness with which successive generations have kept in view the original truths of Christianity,—the teaching and life of Jesus.

No previous period in the history of the Church has had a better right to examine critically the dogmatic systems transmitted to it, than the present. Indeed, it is under a peculiar obligation to probe and test their structure and their foundations. A great critical movement in science, philosophy, and history has changed our intellectual habits, corrected and raised the standard of proof, and discredited many theories previously unquestioned. In every field fresh truths have come to view, shedding new light on the ways of God and on human nature, as well as on the essential and historical relations of God and man. The facts of original Christianity are more accurately known and more vividly realised than at any time since the days of the apostles. Social changes have shifted our point of view, and altered our estimate of the relative importance of the various elements, intellectual, spiritual, and moral, of religion. Lastly, a comparative

study of theological systems, in all their variations from age to age and from Church to Church, has provoked criticism and encouraged freedom.

We may safely conclude, then, that the necessities of the human mind, the very nature of the primal facts of the Christian religion, the discredit into which traditional systems of dogma have fallen, will inevitably produce before long a new development of systematic theology. The change in the intellectual environment, the matrix in which all thought works, will impart to it a stamp peculiar to this age. It will be shaped in harmony with the great conceptions which rule modern thought; such as, the uniformity of Nature, the law of evolution, the close reciprocal relation of what we call the material and the spiritual, the immanence of God, the solidarity of mankind, and the doctrine of heredity. And if we assume, as we can hardly help assuming, that these conceptions are nearer to the truth than those which they have displaced, may we not expect this new development of religious thought to be singularly fruitful, especially when we remember that it will be based on that accurate and thorough knowledge of the gospels with which the critical and historical studies of the last half-century have enriched the Church?

At the same time, no age is more free than the present from the temptation to undervalue its inheritance from the past. Men to-day are profoundly persuaded of the continuity of history. Indeed, the conceptions to which the present age has given form and expression are not so peculiar to it as is sometimes supposed. Every student of history knows that in vague, inchoate forms they have been

working in the minds of men, and have more or less moulded human thought for ages. It is clearly seen that its historical conditions have afforded to each generation a clearer view and a firmer grasp of some truths than other generations have obtained, and at the same time have exposed it to peculiar errors. The present movement of thought, imposing as it is, is only one step in a march which began before we were, and will proceed when we have passed away; our very strength in some directions involves weakness in other directions; our vivid perception of some truths makes us blind to other truths quite as important in themselves. It is certain that we have much to learn, and that the past has much to teach.

Considering then that deep, patient, and prolonged attention has been given, through nearly two thousand years, to Christian theology, that the most powerful minds and the choicest spirits, enlightened by experiences as earnest, as instructive, as hostile to illusions as our experience, have been shaping it in harmony with their vital needs, it is impossible for thoughtful men to feel the contempt for it which in certain quarters is affected, even though it may present some features which are unfamiliar, and may at first appear uncouth. A wise man will reverently study it, and expect to find much truth in it which does not commend itself at once to this generation. Especially when he sees some forms of doctrine persisting through long and widely different periods, he will be inclined to overcome transient objections out of respect for the consenting judgment of the ages. Such, for instance, is the ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity. The

very shock it gives to the mind at first, which men through the centuries have felt as much as we do, will confirm his conviction that there must be vital truth and great value in it. Another doctrine commended by its persistency is that view of the death of Christ which regards it not merely, or mainly, as an appeal to the heart of man, but as a satisfaction offered to the righteousness of God. Indeed, the present writer cannot conceal his conviction that in all speculations which touch the essence of Christianity, and which on that account have been pursued with special ardour and solicitude in the past, the present age will come by its own path to much the same conclusions as have been generally accepted in the Church. Like modern Rome, the new theology will be built largely out of fragments of the old. But in the process of being won afresh, instead of being blindly and passively received, these ancient forms of doctrine will be revived.

Between all these theories, however—by whatever consent of Christendom, or harmony with the prevailing ideas of to-day they are commended to us—and the fundamental truths of which they profess to be the interpretation, the deepest, the firmest distinction must be drawn. To these truths alone absolute authority attaches, and in them alone the vitality and virtue of the Christian religion inheres. All who accept them have a full right to the Christian name, whatever be their attitude towards creeds or dogmatic systems. It is the common belief in them which will at last draw together and unite the sundered Churches. These vital truths, so widely and conclusively verified, are, as we have seen, such as the following: God is the Father of

men; He has made them in His own image,—intelligent, free, immortal; He dwells within them by His Holy Spirit, else they would not be men. Through sin their minds have been darkened and their hearts hardened, and the Holy Spirit, who works through mind and heart, has been more or less obstructed and quenched. The religions in which the communion of God and man is realised have been in various degrees distorted and corrupted. The divine Son of God came into the world in the form of man. He taught the truth about God, presented a pattern of life in God which at once convicts and charms, shames and inspires, and shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. He who believes in Him is pardoned, receives the Holy Spirit, enters into fellowship—the fellowship of trust and love—with God, and with glad consent does God's holy will. He is brought into a conscious relation of brotherhood with his fellow men, and so under a sweet obligation to reverence, love, and serve them. This religion of Jesus will finally heal all wounds, redress all wrongs, compose all strife, and draw the sinful, suffering earth within the bounds of the harmonious and blissful kingdom of God. It is the living source of all that man requires,—strength for duty when it is hardest, comfort under sorrow when it is heaviest, hope in death when it is darkest. There is nothing national, local, transitory in it. Through all the shocks of changing centuries and systems it has survived, and to subdue the earth is its manifest destiny. This is the only catholic faith of which it can be said, Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should hold it.

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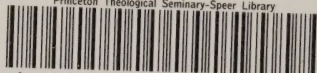
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